

# BULGARIA

A BRIEF  
HISTORICAL  
OUTLINE

DIMITER  
MARKOVSKI

SOFIA PRESS



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The People's Republic of Bulgaria is situated in South-eastern Europe, hugging the right bank of the lower reaches of the Danube River. Her Black Sea coastline is famous for its resorts. The distinguishing geographic feature of the Balkan Peninsula – the Balkan Range (the Haemus, the Balkan) – stretches within its borders. The mountain massifs – the Balkan Range, Sredna Gora, Strandja, the Rhodopes, Rila and the Pirin mountains – and the open plains make up the relief of this country which, over the elapsed thirteen centuries, has more than once discovered, rediscovered and revived itself; it has been discovered and rediscovered by other nations and countries as well.

Bulgaria emerged and received official recognition following two victories over the cosmopolitan Byzantine empire. The first battles took place in the Danube delta area in the year 680 A. D. The conflicts continued in the following year, spreading south of the Balkan Range. This is cited in the Acts of the Sixth Oecumenical Council of the Christian Church in Constantinople (present-day Istanbul). This council, over the course of almost a year, debated and asserted – in opposition to the monothelitic heresy – the official thesis that Christ had two wills, one divine and the other human.

On March 18th, 681, the Byzantine emperor Constantine IV Pagonatus departed from the Council to curb the incursions of the Proto-Bulgarians into Thrace, which violated the wholeness of the empire. But he failed to break their dauntless will and strength. The sixteenth sitting of the Council took place on August 9th of the same year and this is how presbyter Constantine of Apameia in Second Syria addressed the Council: 'I have come to your holy council to tell you that if I had been let to come and speak, we should have suffered what we have been through in the war with the Bulgarians. Because I wanted, from



the very beginning of this council, to come and ask that peace be made, so that something be done to unite the two sides, and either be spared the misery, that is to say, both those who preach the single will and those who uphold the two wills'. It is asserted on the basis of this source that the decisive event occurred not earlier than March 18th and no later than August 9th of

## THE YEAR 681

accepted as Year One of Bulgaria's history.

The formation of the state was not the result of a single act. It was already in existence and the western chronicler Siegebert added to his notes on the year 680: 'Henceforth the Bulgarian kingdom must be noted'. This statement was fully justified, for Khan Asparouh's Bulgaro-Turks had united with the Seven Slav tribes who inhabited the territory north of the Balkan Range from as early as the first battles with Byzantium. The Byzantine chroniclers Patriarch Nicephorus (8th century) and Theophanes the Confessor (late 8th and early 9th century) gave a more detailed account of the occurrences of the time. To quote Theophanes on the treaty of the Byzantine empire with the new state, forced by the actions of the Proto-Bulgarians, 'the emperor made peace with them, undertaking to pay an annual tax to the disgrace of the Byzantines and because of our numerous sins. It is a wonder for all people, both far and near, to hear that the man who had made all people to the East, West, North and South pay taxes to him, was defeated by this new and vulgar people'.

Among domestic sources on the foundation of the Bulgarian state the most important is the Book of the Bulgarian Khans — the first Bulgarian chronicle, compiled at two different times: initially during the rule of the founder of the Bulgarian state Khan Asparouh (680-701), and during the second half of the eighth century.

The new Bulgarian state united Bulgaro-Turks, Slavs and the native population, which consisted mainly of Thracians. Since ancient times the Thracians had formed the indigenous population of these lands, which bear many remains of prehistoric times, reaching as far back as the end of the early paleolithic period of 150,000 years ago.

## THE THRACIANS

were a conglomerate of numerous tribes. The formation of the Thracian tribal community appreciably antecedes the emergence of the other Indo-European communities – the Roman, the Celtic, the German, the Slavic and the Scandinavian. The ancestors of the Thracians had lived on the Balkan Peninsula as far back as the new Stone Age. Experts use the term 'Proto-Thracians' to describe the inhabitants of an extensive area in South-Eastern Europe during the third and second millennium B. C. The name 'Thracians' first appeared at the end of the second millennium B. C. (according to Homer). 'From that time on this term gradually became the common ethnonym for the inhabitants of the area between the Carpathians and the Aegean Sea, the Black Sea and the valleys of the Morava and Vardar rivers' (Acad. V. Georgiev, Prof. A. Foll and Prof. G. I. Georgiev). The people in question spoke related or similar dialects of a common language. During the twelfth and eleventh centuries B. C. the Thracians settled not only on the peninsular mainland and the Mediterranean islands, but also moved south-eastwards into Asia Minor. Thracians took part in the Trojan War. Homer recorded that the Thracian chieftain Rez appeared before the walls of Troy with the most handsome and well-built horses, whiter than snow and fleet as deer.

During the first millennium B. C. the Thracian tribes were a relatively unified tribal entity. Their history can be classified in two main periods: the first one dates from the end of the second millennium B. C. until the end of the 6th century B. C. During this period, and particularly after the eighth century B. C., Greek colonizers began to settle along the Aegean and Black Sea littoral. Quite a number of Greek city-colonies had Thracian names, including Byzantion – later the famous capital of Byzantium (Greek settlers from the town of Megara formed this colony, naming it after Byzas the Thracian). The second period, from the end of the 6th century until the turn of the 3rd century B. C. was the Golden Age of the Thracian state and culture.

According to Herodotus, the Thracians were a multitudinous people. Compared to the Greek city-states, whose total popula-

tion numbered around 200-250 thousand, the tribal nucleus of the Thracian ethnos alone, the people living between the Danube and the Aegean Sea, numbered around one million throughout the first millennium B. C., according to rough estimates.

The biggest state alliance of the Thracians, the state of Odrys, existed from the beginning of the fifth century B. C. until the beginning of the third century B. C. Its first capital was situated somewhere along the lower reaches of the Maritsa River. In mid-fourth century B. C., this state disintegrated into three smaller alliances of which the one with the capital of Seuthopolis (in the area of present-day Kazanluk) survived longest.

How the Thracians titled their rulers is unknown (the Greeks called him *basileus* and the state *basileia*). The state ruler had a council of representatives of the tribal aristocracy. The taxes from the Thracian tribes within the state were levied in gold and silver as well as in the form of gifts such as cloth and other articles. A dragon was depicted on the standard of the Thracians.

Slavery in the Thracian community existed on a smaller scale than in the Greek states. According to Herodotus, however, the Thracians did on occasion sell their own children into slavery. The state of Philip II (359-336 B. C.) and his son Alexander of Macedon (336-323 B. C.) resembled more closely the classical form of slave ownership. Both kings were involved in Greek and Balkan affairs. Alexander of Macedon took the Greek world out east, drafting into his army many Thracians. The reign of the two kings over the lands of the Thracians, though partial and short-lived, helped the introduction of Hellenic culture to the mainland of the Peninsula, particularly to the south of the Balkan Range. The Celts, too, took possession of some Thracian lands. Their state, with the capital of Tilé (near the present-day town of Kazanluk) existed from 279 to 211 B. C. Thus the Celts left their trace on these lands, after which they dispersed to settle over the entire continent, reaching the British Isles. Scythian and other tribes also migrated to the Thracian lands, but the Thracians firmly withstood the invaders. For a very long period, too, the Thracians repelled the attempts of the Roman empire to conquer them. It was only two centuries after



they first set foot on the Balkans in the year 45 A. D., that the Romans succeeded in subjugating all Thracian lands.

A courageous and daring people, the Thracians were employed as mercenaries in the armies of various rulers as early as the Hellenic epoch, later in the Roman auxiliary troops, and from the second century onwards in the legions.

The great slave uprising in the Roman empire (74-71 B. C.) can also be attributed to Thracian history not just because its leader and military commander *Spartacus* was a Thracian (it seems most likely that he came from the Medi tribe which inhabited the areas along the Strouma River) but also for the reason that most of the insurgent slaves were Thracians and Gauls. Historical chronicles on many occasions cite Thracian revolts against the Roman conquerors. The Odrysae tribe (which lived in the Rhodope region) rebelled in the year 21, and the tribes settled south of the Balkan Range revolted in the year 26.

The new ways introduced by the Romans ushered in a new stage in the development of the slave-owning society. A great number of fortified settlements to serve as military posts for the defence of the Roman empire were constructed. Roads, bridges, public buildings, water-supply and sewage systems were constructed on a previously unheard-of scale. What has survived of the latter, open-air theatres included, has been well preserved and become part of the living cities in present-day Bulgaria.

In the third century a process of decline began to take place in the life of the Roman empire. Spent in its efforts to assimilate the conquered peoples, the empire began to be influenced by the inferior cultures it had conquered. The Roman army was manned with soldiers from the rural population of the Danube provinces. (The manning of the Roman army with Germans was to come later.) There were many Thracian cohorts in the empire. Thracian and Illyrian peasants also gained supremacy in the internecine strifes of contenders for the throne. From 236 to 238 Maximinus Thrax held the imperial throne. The Thracian armies secured the throne for Septimius Severus. The Thracian Balkans became the theatre of wars and conflicts. In this way the conqueror came to taste the 'victory' of the vanquished.

Directly or indirectly the Thracians were involved in the

evolution of ancient Mediterranean civilization (Graeco-Hellenic and Roman). The Thracian cultural heritage has left us many examples of gold, silver and bronze ornaments, tools and arms, household objects and vessels. Thracian culture, which preserved what was traditional and at the same time assimilated ideas from other nations, was a link between Europe and the East. Such outstanding finds as the Vulchitrun gold treasure of the eighth century B. C., the Panagyurishtë gold treasure of the fourth century B. C., the tombs near the town of Kazanluk and the village of Mezek, Haskovo district, belonging to the same period, all testify to refined tastes and consummate craftsmanship and art. Particularly indicative of the rich spiritual make-up of the Thracians, of the freedom-loving spirit of this land-tilling and stock-breeding population, was the multiplicity of religious cults it upheld: they worshipped the Horseman and his female counterpart Bendida; they partook of the Dionysian orgies (mainly the southern Thracians); upheld the Orphic teaching, based on the Dionysian cult, which was born in Thrace but later spread to and further developed in the Greek world.

*The Thracian Horseman* (given the Greek name Heros in many reliefs and inscriptions) in his many forms became an almost universal deity during the Roman epoch: a deity of hunting, fertility, life and death, of God the Almighty, the omniscient, the omnipresent. Over 1500 stone reliefs and more than 100 bronze statuettes of the Horseman have been uncovered on the territory of present-day Bulgaria. *The Dionysian cult* was also very widespread, primarily in the mountainous regions of the Haemus, Rhodope and Pirin mountains. In his original, popular conception Dionysus was the god of infinite creativity, of omnifarious Nature, of each tree and flower.

Without underrating the primary importance of ancient Greek culture and of Greek mythology, it would help the better understanding of this culture if we pointed out that Hellas benefitted to a great extent from its contacts and interaction with its Thracian hinterland. It has been established that the author of 'The Pelopones War' was of Thracian extraction. The name of *Orpheus*, whose Thracian origin is indisputable and who is believed to have really lived as a singer, preacher and oracle, is related to the transformation of the Dionysian cult to something

superior, of higher spiritual value. Enriched through Orphism, the Dionysian cult and the related orgies, supplemented and fecundated Greek thinking and it was from the Dionysian cult that the ancient Hellenic tragedy and comedy developed. It is known that Pythagoras, the Greek philosopher and mathematician (580-500 B. C.) was influenced by Orphism and through his teaching helped its dissemination.

The first three centuries following the conquest of the Thracians by the Romans were a time of great confusion as regards religious concepts and cults. Parallel with the traditional religious beliefs, the divine tributes paid to the Roman emperor and the divine city Dea Roma, Serapis and Isis of Egypt, Doliheus of Syrian Comatena, which on occasions became one with Magna Mater Deorum – the Great Mother, also called Cybele, were worshipped. The Thracians also adopted through various channels Christianity, which was officially imposed in the towns after it was made the official religion of the empire in the year 313. In 330 the capital of the empire was moved from Rome to the ancient Byzantium. The centre of the ancient Mediterranean world was moved from West to East. Emerging within the former boundaries of Thrace, Constantinople remained the city of glittering magnificence, attracting the eyes and desires of all conquerors throughout the Middle Ages.

Various tribes continued to cross the Danube from the north-east. The native population neither hastened to unite with them, nor resisted them. The newcomers and the natives, burdened with heavy imperial taxes and multitudinous duties, cooperated in a unique manner. By the end of the third century and especially during the fourth century the lands along the Lower Danube were the target of incessant invasions by various tribes –Goths, Vandals, Huns, etc. By the end of the fifth century and the turn of the sixth century the Slavs also began to infiltrate the Balkan Peninsula on a mass scale.

## THE SLAVS

are one of the indigenous peoples of Europe. When we speak of an all-Slav land of origin we mean the lands between the Carpathians and the Baltic Sea. In Greek and Roman written



sources of two thousand years ago they are cited as Veneds. They began to call themselves Slavs after the fifth century.

If we trace the ethnic origins of the Bulgarian people, we first of all come across its kinship with the Eastern Slavs – the distant forefathers of Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians; with the Western Slavs – the ancient predecessors of Poles, Czechs, Slovaks; and with the rest of the Southern Slavs – the peoples of present-day Yugoslavia. Linguistic, archaeological and ethnographic research indicates that the process of the differentiation of the two major groups of South Slavs set in as early as the fifth to seventh century: the Serbo-Croat group (Serbs, Bosnians, Croats, Montenegrins) and the group of the Bulgarian Slavs, so called because they became a part of the Bulgarian state, which was formed later. The migration of the Slavs to the South of the Danube was in fact so pervasive that Byzantium lost considerably its control over the better part of the Peninsula. The thinning numbers of the local Thracians merged completely with the Slavs. Only a few small groups of Thracians survived in the mountain regions, where they survive to this day as nomadic stock-breeders: they are known as Wallachians (Romanized Thracians) or as Karakachans (Hellenized Thracians). The thousand-year history of the Thracians found its continuation in the birth and flourishing of the new Bulgarian state. Individual elements and features of the Thracian culture left their imprint on the formation and consolidation of the Bulgarian nation. In present times the Thracian heritage is being re-discovered to become part of the ‘historical memory’ of the Bulgarians and is being widely publicized.

The Slavification of the Balkans was something more than an ethno-demographic transformation; it served as a unique catalyst which accelerated the evolution of production relationships and led to a change in the social system of Byzantium itself which enabled it to survive the Western half of the Empire by a whole millennium. With the arrival of the Slavs, slave ownership and the colonial relationships related to it were eliminated from the Balkans by the free rural communes. The free peasant emerged as the basic producer. The communal form



of ownership over the basic means of production – the land – and the appearance of improved tools of production, were but a step from a superior form of ownership – feudalism. The Slavs, on their part, coming in touch with a more civilized world, quickly mastered the new instruments of labour and the art of warfare. By the mid-seventh century the Slavs of the Bulgarian group were almost two centuries ahead of the rest of the Slavs, standing on the threshold of the formation of a state organization. Two military-political alliances came into being: the first in the Salonika area, routed by the Byzantines in the second half of the seventh century, and the second, which withstood the onslaught of Byzantium, in the Danube river area. It was this alliance of seven Slav tribes which, together with the Bulgaro-Turks, who arrived in these lands in 680, formed the new Bulgarian state.

There are substantial grounds for seeking the roots of

## THE PROTO-BULGARIAN ETHNOS

to the east, in Central Asia (the Altai Mountains and the Minusinsk valley). The Proto-Bulgarians inhabited the regions to the north of the Caucasus in close neighbourhood with Georgians and Armenians during the fourth century. They belonged to the Turkic ethno-linguistic group and were kindred in tongue to the Huns, Khazars and Avars. In the course of time they mingled with tribes of Indo-European origin such as the Alans and Sarmatians. Later, in the sixth century they interacted with the Slavs either in invading Byzantium or by serving as its mercenaries.

The state alliance based around the Volga and known as 'Great Bulgaria' (from the end of the 6th century to 660) after the death of its ruler Khan Koubrat disintegrated under the pressure of the Khazars. A major proportion of these Bulgarians, led by Koubrat's sons, Asparouh and Kouber, set out for the Danubian basin. Another group, led by Alzek, travelled west, reaching what is today Northern Italy. In 680 the Proto-Bulgarian group of Khan Asparouh (some 250-300 thousand people) settled in the Danube delta area. They constituted the basic nucleus of the new state called Bulgaria, which later gradually came to include the Slavs of the Bulgarian group.

Asparouh's brother Kouber, who initially settled with his people in Panonia, left there around 685 due to a disagreement with the Avar khan, moved east and settled in the Bitola country, for which reason Byzantine chroniclers called his settlement 'Bulgaria' too. These two kindred ethnic groups maintained close and active relations. An inscription uncovered near the village of Madara, Shoumen district, and a number of Byzantine chronicles testify to this.

Thus, by the end of the 'great migration of the peoples' a new political and national unit had emerged – the Bulgarian Khanate, later on a kingdom. This took place at a time when Rome was latinizing its barbaric conquerors and turning them to civilization, while Byzantium was rent by internal religious dissent and involved in wars with its Asian neighbours. While the Thracians were assimilated by the Slavs prior to the formation of the new state, the Proto-Bulgarians and the Slavs followed a relatively independent course of development within the boundaries of the same state until the end of the ninth century. The Proto-Bulgarians inhabited mainly North-Eastern Bulgaria, although traces of them have been discovered in Western Bulgaria, the Rhodope mountains and Macedonia (in the area to the north of Salonika, where Kouber's group settled).

The Proto-Bulgarians had a well developed literary tradition. In the new state, however, their script was not put to use, for the Greek script was in currency as a more effective means of communication between the various ethnic groups. A great number of stone-carved Bulgarian inscriptions – chronological, victorious and memorial – testify to the existence of an advanced 'historical memory'. The Turnovo inscription of Khan Omourtag (816-831) is indicative of this: 'Man, even if he lives well, dies and another is born. Let the man born last, when he looks at this, recall the man who has made it.' Chronological inscriptions disclose that the Old Bulgarian calendar was one of the most accurate and perfected calendars of the time. Old Bulgarian chronology was based on a twelve-year animal cycle, each individual year being designated by the Turkic names of an animal.

Stone sculptures and reliefs were an intrinsic part of the art of the Proto-Bulgarians. The fortress gates of Pliska, the first

Bulgarian capital, were ornamented with stone figures of lions – the symbol of state power. Particularly noteworthy is the relief near the village of Madara – the *Madara Horseman*, which dates from the mid-eighth century. It has not so far been established what this relief signifies, whether it is a real picture of a Bulgarian khan, a symbol of the khan's power, a depiction of a mythological character or a personification of Tangra, the Proto-Bulgarians' supreme God. There are stone engravings, drawings and graffiti in the early Proto-Bulgarian centres all depicting horsemen, some of which are totally identical to the one at Madara. The totemistic religion of the Proto-Bulgarians held the horse a sacred animal. The banner of the Proto-Bulgarian troops consisted of a horse's tail attached to a spearhead. During the pagan years of the Bulgarian state the standard of the Bulgarian rulers remained the same.

The Slavs made up the bulk of the population of the newly-formed state, and it was they who shaped the infant nation. In the first half of the 9th century the process of ethnical assimilation and consolidation spread to all areas in which Slavs of the Bulgarian group predominated. Towards the middle of the ninth century the Slavs prevailed, bilingualism came to an end, and the Slavonic language became official. Initially the language of Kouber's Proto-Bulgarians and later on that of Asparouh's Proto-Bulgarians disappeared. Thus they lent their name only to the new state. There are various assumptions as to the origin of the name 'Bulgarian'. According to some, 'Bulgarian' designates a man who tanns or deals in hides; according to another hypothesis, the name derives from 'Bulga' – the name of an animal that lived in the steppes of Central Asia and was renowned for its fine fur, and which in all likelihood was a Proto-Bulgarian totem centuries before our times. Many more hypotheses on the meaning of the name 'Bulgarian' could be cited.

The name of the new state, no doubt, derives by tradition from the one-time Great Bulgaria (Koubrat's Bulgaria) and is a recognition of the major role the Proto-Bulgarians played in the war against Byzantium as well as in the construction of the entire military and administrative apparatus, and in the building and strengthening of the new state organization. The lands populated



by Slavs of the Bulgarian group were soon retrieved from Byzantium. One stone inscription in Greek from the time of Khan Presian (836-852) calls the khan a 'God-appointed ruler of the many Bulgarians'. In 842 Macedonia from the Western Rhodopes to the cities of Ohrid and Preslav, Mizia and Thrace were stable, integral parts of Bulgaria. By that time the name 'Bulgarians' had come to signify people, primarily Slav in origin, who had prevailed over the Proto-Bulgarian element in *the consolidation of the nationality* as a lasting historical category.

The rise of the Bulgarian state was reflected in many a Western European chronicle. In addition to the above-mentioned chronicle of Monk Zibert (1030-1112), important events relating to the new political formation on the Balkan Peninsula were mentioned in the so-called Kavena Chronicles of the 11th century, Andrei Dandolo's chronicle and the so-called Istoria Palatina of the 14th century. Bulgaria played an important part in the early stage of the European Middle Ages, when more progressive feudal relationships were taking hold and states were formed on the basis of nationality. Bulgarian troops, posted by Khan Tervel, helped rescue Constantinople from the Arab expansion of 717-718 which was as terrible as the invasion of the Arab Kurdish Caliphate in the Pyrenees, and against the state of the Franks. In later years (805), the Franks and the Bulgarian Khan Kroum jointly destroyed the Avar Khanate in Panonia. Thus this aggressive and warlike alliance, which for many centuries had hindered the formation of independent national states in Central Europe was eliminated.

Particularly important during the Middle Ages were

## BULGARIA'S RELATIONS WITH BYZANTIUM

These relations to a large extent determined the political situation in the Balkans. What we have in mind here are not the relations between two Balkan nations. Byzantium was an agglomeration of various ethnic communities – within her borders lived various Hellenized peoples, apart from the Greeks. In the multi-national



empire, which stretched across three continents – Europe, Asia and Africa, the dominant language was Greek, which in the seventh century was made the official state and religious language. In this sense we can only conditionally differentiate between the Greek and Byzantine identity. The Greeks themselves, the Thracians, and the other Balkan peoples, were conquered by Rome. The Greeks called themselves Hellenes, and their country Hellas. The Romans were the first to call them Greeks – after the Grecoes, a small tribe in Epirus who were the most familiar to the Romans. This name was later adopted by the Slavs.

The relations between Bulgaria and Byzantium from the foundation of the Bulgarian state in 681 to the end of the fourteenth century when Bulgaria was conquered by the Ottomans, had two major features. The Bulgarian rulers, on the one hand, aspired to conquer Constantinople and inherit the empire. On the other hand, the Byzantines regarded the Bulgarian state as temporarily holding imperial territory and tried by various means – wars, political dealing and manoeuvring, religion and culture, to subjugate it. Byzantium eventually succeeded in conquering the Bulgarian state and kept it for more than a century and a half – from 1018 to 1187. For this reason the history of Mediaeval Bulgaria is divided into three periods: the First Bulgarian Kingdom, Byzantine domination and the Second Bulgarian Kingdom.

From the seventh to the fourteenth century Bulgaria fought a total of 115 wars: 30 against the Magyars, 14 against the Serbs, 6 altogether against the Franks, Moravians, Latins at different times, and the greatest number against Byzantium. Of the 65 Bulgaro-Byzantine wars, 46 were victorious for the Bulgarians, 15 were won by Byzantium and 4 ended indecisively. Some of these military clashes were brief, while others dragged on for years. Despite repeated demonstrations of her military might, Bulgaria suffered defeat with fatal consequences at a time when it had reached the peak of its territorial expansion and political power. Researchers point out many reasons for this, one of which was the conquering strategy itself of the Bulgarian rulers: they tried to conquer Constantinople by land only. This is characteristic both of Khan Kroum (803-814) and Tsar Simeon

(864-927). Simeon was the first to title himself 'Tsar of all Bulgarians and Byzantines'. The Bulgarian royal title 'Tsar' derived from the Gothic 'kaisar', which, having passed through the Latin 'Caesar', had been transcribed into tsar in accordance with the specifics of the Bulgarian speech. This title makes no secret of the desires of the Bulgarian rulers to occupy the throne of the Eastern half of the former Roman empire.

Constantinople, however, could be captured only after a siege and in complete isolation from its Balkan and Asian hinterland. Tsar Samouil (976-1014), who pushed Bulgaria's borders further to the South and to the West, and who made Ohrid his capital (the third Bulgarian capital after Pliska and Preslav), set out to achieve this. The country's resources at that time, however, were thinning out. Bulgaria found herself isolated in the acute conflicts between Rome and Constantinople, and despite all endeavours, failed to win the support of any Central European state. After half a century of warring with various degrees of success for both sides, Byzantium conquered Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian nation, already a stable community, tenaciously resisted the foreign domination. A number of uprisings sparked off in Macedonia, Epirus, Thessaly, Thrace, Moesia and other regions. Two of the revolts proclaimed their own Bulgarian kings: Peter Delyan (1040) and Constantine Bodin (1072). The foreign rulers were overthrown by the liberation movement of the Bulgarians, led by Assen and Peter, in the area between the Balkan Range and the Danube River (1185-1188). The centre of the movement was the city of Turnovo, which became the fourth capital of Mediaeval Bulgaria. The resurrected kingdom took up and developed further the traditions of the First Bulgarian state.

Bulgarian-Byzantine relations also had a number of objective consequences, as a result of which the Bulgarian people became an alloy which weathered all vicissitudes of history. Of tremendous importance was the adoption of Christianity in 865. An oecumenical council in the second Bulgarian capital of Preslav voted in 893 to introduce a script, valid both for state and church, based on the spoken vernacular of the majority of the country's population — the language of the Bulgarian Slavs. Both



acts were the doing of Prince Boris (852-907). At great expense of effort and bloodshed, not even sparing his first-born son, Prince Boris overcame the internal rejection of contemporary Bulgarian society and imposed Christianity as the official state religion. The adoption of Christianity was above all an important political act, aimed at bringing Bulgaria up to the level of the advanced states of the time. Having joined Bulgaria to the Eastern Orthodox Church, Prince Boris made the next decisive move. With his support and aid, after 866 religious activities began to be carried out in the Slavonic language, using the script and the works of the Slav apostles Constantine-Cyril and Methodius. The mission of the two brothers as official emissaries of Byzantium to Great Moravia encountered hardships and ordeals to eventually mature into a great cause which radically affected the better part of the Slavs. Persecuted and tortured by the German clergy, the disciples of Cyril and Methodius were heartily welcomed in Bulgaria, which thus became the cradle of the Slav alphabet and culture. The daring rejection of the trilingual dogma (according to which Christianity could only be preached in Latin, Greek and Hebrew) quickly found practical application. Ten years after the cause of Cyril and Methodius became Bulgarian state policy, Greek was banished from the religious service. Even in the remotest settlements, the western areas included, where Kliment of Ohrid, the disciple and associate of Cyril and Methodius, worked (840-916), the service was read in Slav-Bulgarian, or as it has been named for the sake of accuracy – in Old Bulgarian.

The Old Bulgarian literary language helped the independent development of the Bulgarians. This took place at a time when the greater part of Mediaeval Europe had no national literary languages and made use of Latin and Greek.

Turning to account Byzantium's experience, Bulgaria began very early to draw on the values of preceding millennia (they encompassed the cultural heritage of many countries and peoples). The father of the Slav script and culture, Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher (c. 826-869), a graduate of the renowned Magnaur school in Constantinople and later a teacher of philosophy at the same school, was well-versed in ancient classics and some of the

cultural achievements of the East, including those of the famous Armenian philosopher David Anaht the Invincible. The works of Cyril and Methodius helped educated Bulgarians get to know the philosophical and literary wealth of Graeco-Hellenic and Roman times. The works of the Bulgarian men of letters of the ninth and tenth centuries revealed their knowledge of the works of such ancient scientists and philosophers as Thales, Permenides, Democritus,, Plato, Aristotle, Strabo and Ptolemy. The Bulgarian rulers themselves were intensively involved in this upsurge of Bulgarian literature and culture, especially the son of Prince Boris — Tsar Simeon, who also was educated at the Magnaur school. The compilation of the *Zlatostrui* (Didactic Gospel), a collection of excerpts from the writings of John Chrysostom, and a theological encyclopedia entitled 'A collection of the writings of many priests' are attributed to his name. Presbitern Kozma's 'Lecture against the Bogomils' (tenth c.) betrays a good measure of patriotism. From the positions of the official ideology he does not confine himself solely to the castigation of a heresy, but goes on to disclaim certain failings and weaknesses of the social system, rejecting the moral decay among the high clergy and the feudal aristocracy and seeking the underlying reasons for the people's discontent.

The creation of these and many other works of spiritual value was paralleled by extensive building. Many new churches and palaces were erected, of which The Golden Church in the second Bulgarian capital of Preslav, the fortresses of the third Bulgarian capital Ohrid, and others were particularly notable. The peculiar Bulgarian -Byzantine symbiosis, which is of late frequently mentioned in historiographical studies, gave birth to an entirely new civilization — the Eastern Orthodox.

After Byzantium was conquered by the Fourth Crusade at the end of the 12th century and the so-called Latin empire was formed, Bulgaria again stood out as a major power in the south-east of Europe. Tsar Kaloyan (1197-1207) routed near Adrianople the troops of the Latin emperor Baldwin of Flanders and took him prisoner. To win the official recognition of the Bulgarian state he concluded a union with the Roman Curia (1204-1232). Tsar Ivan Assen II (1218-1241) restored Bulgaria's



territory to the extent of its former greatest territorial power with an outlet to the three seas – the Aegean, the Black and the Adriatic. After his great victory over the despot Theodor Comnenus (1230) near the village of Klokotnitsa (in the present-day Haskovo district) he became the most powerful ruler on the Balkans. The Latin crusaders and the guardians of the teenage Baldwin were forced to seek his protection and betrothed Ivan Assen's very young daughter to the teenage emperor. Thus the title of Ivan Assen II – 'King of Bulgarians and Greeks' – reflected to a great extent the power that he exercised. With the blessing of all Eastern patriarchs he restored the Bulgarian Patriarchy which had existed during the reign of Tsar Simeon, thereby restoring the independence of the Bulgarian church (1235).

With its policy and actions, the second Bulgarian state managed to check the attempts of the western colonizers to conquer the entire south-east of Europe. This allowed the Nycean Byzantine state in Asia Minor breathing space, to pick up strength and in 1261 to repulse the Latins and restore Byzantium.

From the 12th to the 14th century Bulgaria also made progress in its socio-economic development. The Bulgarian rulers minted and put in circulation their own coins, the urban population grew, stable trading contacts were established with the western Balkan states and North-Italian city-republics, such as Venice and Genoa. Another characteristic feature of Bulgarian feudal society at this time was also its openness to the surrounding world, to near and far-off countries and cultures.

In the 13th and 14th centuries Bulgaria again became a thriving cultural centre. The flowering of the Turnovo school of art was related to the feudal construction of palaces and churches, to literary activity in the royal court, the patriarchy and the monasteries, and to the development of the handicrafts. Remarkable achievements of this school have been preserved down to this day: the murals of the Boyars' houses in Trapezitsa and the 'Forty Holy Martyrs' church in Veliko Turnovo, the Boyana Church (1259), the rock church near the village of Ivanovo (Roussé district) – fourteenth century, etc. Book il-

luminations also developed, particularly during the reign of Tsar Ivan Alexander (1331-1371) – the Manasses Chronicle, the Tetraevangelia of Ivan Alexander and the Tomich psalter. Hesychasm also found its way into official literature of the 14th century. This ‘heresy’ among the highest feudal aristocracy and the religious and writing élite of the time was expounded in the so-called Kilifarevo school by such writers as Theodosius of Turnovo, Patriarch Euthimius of Turnovo, Grigorii Tsamblak and Constantine Kostenetchky. The time they worked in was a critical period in Bulgaria’s history – the Ottoman invaders were pressing up against the country’s borders. The various literary and spiritual works created by the above-mentioned men served as a bridge to the future preservation of the Bulgarian nationality and to fruitful contact with other cultures. Of particularly great importance was the orthographic reform initiated by Patriarch Euthimius of Turnovo, which introduced a new, all-valid, Old Bulgarian spelling. This was later adopted in Serbia, Romania and Russia.

Secular works – chronicles, novelettes and short stories – appeared side by side with religious works in official Bulgarian Mediaeval culture. The chronicle of the Byzantine writer Constantine Manasses, translated during the reign of Tsar Ivan Alexander, contains supplements to Bulgarian history all the way from the birth of the state to the fourteenth century. Particularly interesting is the so-called ‘Bdin collection’, written during the reign of Tsar Ivan Srazimir and Tsaritsa Anna (1360), which deals solely with women in the Middle Ages. This collection, unique in terms of Slav literature, is kept in the Central Library of the Belgian town of Ghent (published in Belgium and reprinted in Britain in 1980). Translation of works of prose were also widespread in mediaeval Bulgaria. The ‘Alexandria’, which tells of the life and deeds of Alexander of Macedon, at that time a very popular literary work, was translated into Bulgarian in the 10th and 11th centuries. This book was copied and read in Bulgaria by people from all walks of life until the second half of the nineteenth century.

The Bulgarian apocryphal writings and culture (heretic), rejecting the existing social system, were greatly beneficial to



Bulgaria's contacts with the West and the rest of the world in the context of antagonistic relations of Catholicism and the Eastern Orthodox religion. The apocrypha spread across Bulgaria as early as the tenth century. Most of the apocryphal writings were translations of Byzantine religious romances – both Old and New Testament. The so-called Bulgarian apocryphal chronicle, which relates the formation of the Bulgarian state and lauds the Bulgarian people as 'God's elect' was compiled in the eleventh century during the years of Byzantine domination. 'The Salonika legend', written in the same period, glorified the cause of the Slav Apostles Cyril and Methodius, while 'The popular life' of Ivan of Rila praised the founder of the Rila Monastery as an exponent of the Bulgarian people.

The apocrypha also greatly influenced the thematic range and style of folk art.

The apocryphal writings crossed Bulgaria's borders to other countries too. It has been established, for instance, that in writing his Divine Comedy, Dante Alighieri used the apocryphal concept of the structure of the 'nether world' and the 'life' therein as described in the Bulgarian New Testament apocrypha 'The Descent of the Virgin into Hell' and 'The presentation of the Apostle Paul' (in the Divine Comedy Dante explicitly quotes the latter).

*The Heretic Traditions*, whose roots in the Balkans go back to the times before the migration of the Slavs and the proto-Bulgarians to the Peninsula, continued in Mediaeval Bulgaria. The Byzantine emperors were also instrumental in maintaining this tradition by resettling the population of Asia Minor as a border population of the Empire. Among the most widespread heretic teachings of the tenth to fourteenth centuries was *the Bogomil movement*. This teaching comprised elements of the Christian religion and the Anatolian religious dualism, which sprang from Manicheanism in the early Christian era. The Bogomil teaching held that man must strive for the consummate spiritual world of virtues, i. e. strive for what is God's creation and disclaim the material, the carnal, including the official institutions, which were regarded as the infernal creation of Satan. The denunciation of the monastic institutions, the state and the church in the name of the free meditation of Christian truth and

individual communication with God without an intermediary was the underlying essence of the Bogomil teaching, which became a mass phenomenon among the Bulgarians in the years of Byzantine domination. The Bogomils were actively involved in some of the Bulgarian uprisings of the time. Their leader in the 12th century, Vasilii, after a debate held in Constantinople, was condemned to be burnt at the stake.

Throughout the Middle Ages the Bogomil teaching held sway in many countries: it infiltrated Byzantium, particularly Byzantium's provinces in Asia Minor, Italy, France, Central Europe and Russia. The teachings of the Cathars and the Albigians in Western Europe, which appeared in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were connected with the Bulgarian Bogomils from the organizational and ideological point of view. Typically Bogomil dualistic writings such as John's Gospel (the Secret Book – ninth to tenth century), the Cathar Missal and others were taken out of the country.

In times of extraordinary oppression and crises, the peasants rose also in armed revolts against exploitation both by domestic and by foreign masters. Noteworthy here is the uprising of 1277, which in actual fact was the first mediaeval peasant war and whose leader, the swineherd Ivailo, ascended the throne, albeit for a limited period.

During the years of Ivailo's rebellion and afterwards Bulgaria suffered at the hands of the Tartars of 'the Golden Horde', who for a number of years interfered in the domestic affairs of the country. The Bulgarian state survived the crisis, beat off the Tartars, and strengthened and consolidated its resources to make new progress in its development at a time when all the Eastern Slavs were conquered by the Tartars.

Bulgaria had a beneficial influence on the initial development of the Russian state. Bulgaria sent missionaries to Russia when Russia adopted Christianity in 988, and Old Bulgarian became the official state and religious language of Russia in the eleventh century. However, the life-giving juices which flowed to the Eastern Slavs from the South during the fourteenth century, after a break of two centuries, were even more significant. In the history of Russian culture this period of Old Bulgarian influence



is known as the '*Second South Slavic Influence*'. Its main agents were the monks and priests: Russian monks visited the schools and monasteries in Bulgaria or settled to live in the monasteries on Mount Athos, which were inhabited by Bulgarian monks and were supported by the Bulgarian rulers.

The Old Bulgarian literary language became the official state and religious language in the Wallachian lands in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. After 1352, when the Ottomans began to penetrate the Balkans, many Bulgarian men of letters and monks left the country with literary masterpieces and travelled to monasteries and bishoprics in Wallachia and Russia. By the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century, literary activities in Serbia flourished under the influence of Old Bulgarian culture through such pan-Slavic writers as Constantine Kostenetchky, Grigorii Tsamblak, Vladislav the Grammarian and Dimitar Kratovski.

Bulgaria and her neighbours frequently found themselves in conflict during the Middle Ages. Rivalry between East and West after 1054 ran very high, particularly after the break of relations between the two main centres of the Christian religion, Rome and Constantinople. Despite various peculiarities, differences and nuances, it can be said that a standard cycle prevailed in the socio-economic development of the various nationalities and regions on the continent during the Middle Ages. The situation on the Balkans and in part of Central Europe changed radically when they became provinces of the Ottoman Empire. They entered the orbit of a backward, but sturdy and stable military feudal system. The Bulgarian lands fell

## UNDER OTTOMAN DOMINATION

in their entirety in 1396.

*The Turks* had, before coming to the Balkans, lived in Central Asia. In the thirteenth century Ertogrul and Osman I founded in North-Western Anatolia a small Islamic state, which over a short period of time expanded into some of Byzantium's lands and grew to threaten Christian Europe. The perfect military organization of the Ottomans was a new triumph of the nomad

stereotype after the Tartars. The strict centralized power helped the Ottomans to deal rapidly with the warring feudal barons in the Balkans and to conquer Europe as far as Vienna. Thus Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbians, Hungarians, Armenians and Arabs remained for several centuries under Ottoman oppression. From the 15th to the 17th century Istanbul (Constantinople) was the glittering capital of a powerful Empire, after which its downfall set in, speeded by the national liberation movements of the oppressed nations and the series of Russo-Turkish wars. The modern republic of Turkey came into being as a result of the successful anti-imperialist liberation movement led by Mustapha Kemal Atatürk.

On the eve of the Ottoman occupation, the population of Bulgaria split into two kingdoms and two independent feudal areas, numbered, according to rough estimates, about 2,500,000 people. It is assumed that immediately after the establishment of Ottoman power it was reduced by half – some part of the Bulgarians perished in the course of the war, others were taken captive and sold in slavery.

A considerable number of Bulgarians were expelled from the towns and their place taken by Ottoman troops and clerks, and later merchants and craftsmen. This ushered in a mass colonization of the most fertile regions of the country by the Muslims. In addition great numbers of Greeks, Wallachians, Jews, Armenians and Ragusians took up trading and profitable crafts.

From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century the Bulgarian population, which was composed primarily of peasants, was placed in the conditions of a new economic order. The land was regarded as the property of the supreme ruler, the Sultan, who distributed it among his subordinate administrators (judges), war veterans and servicemen of the reserve, and to the so-called *spahi* – regular servicemen. It was the duty of the landed officers and servicemen to report in times of war in full battle trim at the places of muster in various districts (*sandjaks*). Ottoman patterns of ownership were characterized by the fact that the Sultan considered the land his own property. The *spahi*, however, also considered the land his property, for he collected the taxes. The man who cultivated the land also regarded it as his



property because he had a title-deed. These unstable ownership relations were greatly beneficial to the exercise of strong central power.

The Sultan placed the Bulgarian church under the authority of the Constantinople Patriarchy, which posted Greek bishops to the Bulgarian bishoprics.

The Bulgarians in the Rhodopes and Northern Bulgaria were repeatedly subjected to forced Mohammedanization. A brutal form of denationalization through conversion to Islam was the *devshirme* (the blood tax). Young Bulgarian boys from the larger families and the best part of the growing adolescents were regularly taken away from the 15th to the 18th centuries to be converted to Islam and brought up with fierce religious fanaticism.

The Bulgarians, however, despite all oppression, found the strength and occasion to put up resistance, availing themselves of the protection that the mountains offered. From individual acts of personal revenge the haidout movement matured into a movement for collective self-defence. Conspiracies and local revolts flared up in different parts of the country.

The campaigns against the Ottomans by the rulers of certain Central European states sparked off armed unrest among the Bulgarians but failed to bring about the expected change in the state of affairs. However, it was Russia who became the mainstay of the Balkan Christian population, the Bulgarians included. (By the end of the 15th century Russia had already freed itself from Tartar domination).

Cultural and political links between the Bulgarian people and Russia were restored during the 16th century, when the Moscow kingdom had come to stay as the only large, independent state where the Eastern Orthodox religion had survived and struck roots as the official religion. In the words of Priest Philotey of Pskov after the Turks conquered Constantinople, i. e. after 1453, Moscow became the third Rome, 'and a fourth there will never be'. The legendary myth of 'grandfather Ivan' as the personification of protective Russia was widespread among the Bulgarians. The Russo-Turkish wars of the 18th and 19th cen-



turies, some of which were fought on Bulgarian soil, helped confirm the credibility of this legend.

All along economy had forged ahead. Through trade and finance the Ottoman empire worked its way into the Western European economy. European merchandise appeared on the markets of the empire and ports were built for the export of farm products to Western and Central Europe. Many Bulgarians were engaged in this area of trade.

The changes affected the rural areas too, leading to somewhat easier living circumstances. A great number of peasants migrated to the towns, where the Bulgarian element was beginning to gain dominance. The Bulgarians, quick at learning commerce and mastering the crafts, formed their own trade guilds, which had a large membership. The business section of the Bulgarians was coming to the fore. Well-off Bulgarians became the proprietors of trading firms, in import and export of goods, organized large-scale stock-breeding or took over the collection of state taxes. The Bulgarians did brisk business on the markets in Central Europe (Hungary, Poland, Wallachia and Russia) where full-fledged colonies of Balkan and Bulgarian merchants sprang up.

At home the Bulgarian townfolk competed with the Greeks and the Wallachians for business. The Bulgarian side of the competition was supported by the peasantry, which was suffering under the arbitrary taxation policy of the Constantinople patriarchy, which controlled, in addition to the Church, the Bulgarian schools where instruction was given in Greek. The Bulgarians longed to exterminate the Greek language and influence in the Bulgarian church, schools and public life. The most outstanding exponent of such endeavours was Father Paissi of Hilendar (1722-1773). He himself came from a village (Bansko, present-day Blagoevgrad district), whose craftsmen and merchants were competing with the Greeks both on the domestic and Austrian markets. Being familiar with the Greek and Serbian national movements (they developed, for a number of reasons, earlier than the Bulgarian) he sat down and wrote a small book called 'Slav-Bulgarian History' (1762), which became a 'popular patriotic gospel' (Prof. Hristo Gandev).

Paissi's history hailed *the transition to a new epoch in Bulgaria's history*. This was an epoch of extreme enthusiasm and uplift, which spread throughout the Central and North-Eastern Balkans, where the population was predominantly Bulgarian. This was an epoch of the re-creation of Bulgaria, known as

## THE BULGARIAN NATIONAL REVIVAL.

From the point of view of European development the formation and ripening of the Bulgarian bourgeois nation coincides with the age of classical capitalism, i. e. with what bourgeois historiography calls the Victorian Age. The revival process was in full swing during the first half and especially during the third quarter of the 19th century, the time when the Bulgarian bourgeoisie, having gained in number, economic power and social status, was highly susceptible to West European political and cultural influence and was able to appreciate the significance of national enlightenment and culture. All this came as a result of the intense trade with Europe.

And, while we know of the existence of some 390 monasteries and settlements in which books were hand-copied and most of which had small schools during the 17th and 18th century (in these schools, mostly set up at monasteries, instruction was given by the synthetical method, the church psalms and basic arithmetic, though on a smaller scale; teachers at such schools used to exercise the pupils on a wax-coated board), in the '70s of the 19th century there were some 2000 schools in the Bulgarian-populated lands – democratic in character and secular in the nature of education. Textbooks, too, began to be published as early as the first stage of the ensuing education work. After the 'Fish Primer' was issued in 1824 (the first textbook for elementary school), textbooks in grammar, arithmetic, history, geography, physics and other school subjects began to appear at various times.

During the early 19th century a unified spoken and written new Bulgarian language started to establish itself through education, literature and journalism. This language became prevalent



in all regions populated by Bulgarians who, towards the mid-19th century, numbered no fewer than 4 million in Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia, which equalled four times as much as the ruling nationality – the Turks (according to approximate estimates, based on a 1844 household census taken in the Balkan provinces vassal to the Porte).

The formation of the Bulgarian nation took almost one century from the second half of the 18th to the middle of the 19th century. The Bulgarian parishes (the sole form of organization for the Bulgarians after their state was conquered) during the 19th century gradually became a major institution of the Bulgarian nation, carrying out administrative, taxation, educational and cultural work. They also became schools for public life, notwithstanding their limited authority and the conservatism of the well-to-do Bulgarians (the *chorbadjii*). The trade guilds too were involved in this upsurge and the teachers, both in the town and in the country, stood at its helm. The movement for Bulgarian education and an independent Bulgarian church, this 'bourgeois peaceful revolution in the Bulgarian lands' (Dimitar Blagoev) engaged generations of *national enlighteners*, some of whom fell prey to the persecution and slander of the Patriarchy and the Ottoman rule. Such was the fate, for instance, of the brothers Dimitar and Kostantin Miladinov, who pioneered the collection and publication of Bulgarian folklore (their work has today been published in ten volumes). In 1870 the Porte officially recognized the independent Bulgarian church and hence the Bulgarians as an independent nationality (prior to this the Bulgarians were categorized either as Christians or Greeks).

The intellectual life of the Bulgarians in the 19th century was influenced strongly by Russian culture. Russian scholars and public figures placed themselves at the service of the Bulgarian revival. The government of Russia issued grants to Bulgarian youths who were sent to study in Russia by Bulgarian village communes and city municipalities, school trustees and parish councils. Among those educated in Russia were such distinguished Bulgarians as Naiden Gerov (author of a six-volume dictionary of the Bulgarian language), Prof. Marin Drinov, Nesho Bonchev, Lyuben Karavelov and Hristo Botev.



The Bulgarians also drew on the experience of the European democratic movements. Quite a few Bulgarians were involved in these movements and the liberation struggles of neighbouring peoples.

However, the struggle of the Bulgarians for political liberation encountered many complications and unexpected setbacks. Russia and the Austrian empire had, since the end of the 16th century, been putting systematic pressure on the Porte, directing their expansion to the Balkans. In the meantime the economic contacts of the Ottoman empire with Western Europe facilitated the development of productive forces on the empire's territory and the promotion of the new, more progressive bourgeois social relations. The credits allocated to the empire by the West European capitalist countries bound it to economic dependency and in time the Ottoman empire became a kind of a semi-colony and a target of the conflicting interests of the Great Powers who spelled the course of European affairs. These conflicting interests, the designs of the foreign powers on the possessions of the withering Ottoman empire were impersonally known as the 'Eastern Question'. The object of the antagonistic aspirations was very much partial, however. In the chronically ailing empire the oppressed nationalities were standing up for their rights, seeking ways and means to throw off foreign domination. They also were a part of this 'Eastern Question'.

During the first half of the nineteenth century Russia dominated the scene, becoming, by virtue of her political and military might, a major factor in European politics. At the time Russia acted more or less unimpeded against the Ottoman empire, and her aspirations (even if we discard sentimental motives) coincided with those of the liberation struggles of the Balkan peoples.

During the war of 1810-1811 Russian troops controlled for some time the Bulgarian towns of Dobrich (present-day Tolbukhin), Pleven, Razgrad, Lovech and Sevlievo. Organizing their assistance to the Russians, the Bulgarians set up their own People's Committee for Liberation, headed by bishop Sophronius of Vratsa, one of the first writers of the Bulgarian Revival. The Committee also organized a Bulgarian People's

Army, which took part in the siege of Silistra in 1811. During the war of 1828-29, when the Russian army crossed the Balkans from the Danube on the way to Adrianople, the Bulgarians again organized themselves to fight for liberation. The Porte relinquished its hold on some of its possessions, albeit on the outlying ones. It granted autonomy to Serbia in 1815 and independence to Greece in 1829. The attainment of the political freedom of the Bulgarians, due to the country's proximity to the capital of the empire and for a number of other reasons, proved the crux of the Eastern question. Many Bulgarians over this period left their native parts to settle in Russia.

After the Crimean War (1853-1856) external circumstances from the point of view of the Bulgarian struggles for political liberation were complicated. Russia suffered defeat. The West European capitalist states, whose designs provided for the preservation of the entity of the Ottoman empire, gained superiority in the settlement of the Eastern question. From the beginning of the 19th century the Porte launched some reforms aimed at revitalizing the empire. A regular army was set up on the Western European model. The *spahi* institution was abolished in the '30s to let the basic producers, the farmers and artisans, settle their relationship with central power directly through taxation, independent of their local masters. These and other reforms that followed were, however, either only half-way implemented or simply remained on paper. Great care was expended only on the upkeep of a well-equipped and modernized army.

The penetration of European capitalism into the economy of the Ottoman empire led to a one-sided economic development within the empire and the Bulgarian lands. Many of the workshops, whose produce had been sold on the empire's markets all the way from Bosnia to Egypt and throughout the Arab Peninsula, failed to keep up with the competition and went bankrupt. The Ottoman empire became an exporter of farm produce (cotton, wool, leather, fur, silk, etc.) to the European markets and a consumer of a large portion of Europe's industrial goods.

It was in these circumstances that the Bulgarians' patriarchal and regional awareness became a national awareness. In the con-



text of foreign domination the structure of Bulgarian society did not become entirely bourgeois. In the third quarter of the 19th century four textile and two silk-spinning mills, two soap-making factories, a salt-petre factory, a state printing house and rolling stock repair shop, a macaroni factory, a beer and liquor breweries, a shoe-polish factory, three tanneries, six steam-operated flour mills and some twenty more advanced water-mills went into operation on territories populated by Bulgarians. This made a total of 25 industrial enterprises employing no more than 750 workers. The numbers of the working class grew also as a result of the differentiation that took place among the artisans and the increasing demand for wage labour by city firms, shops and inns. According to latest research, hired- and white-collar workers in the cities by the end of the '60s amounted to 12 per cent. Their wages were paltry and labour legislation non-existent.

A fair number of Bulgarians had intentions of building new factories but they came up against insurmountable difficulties and their capital thus went mostly into commerce or money-lending. In this way Bulgarian society was unable to go beyond the manufacturing, commercial and money-lending stage of capitalist development. That amounted to a syncretism of social structures, i. e. the individual social groups had two-way functions — they were bound both to the old disintegrating system and to the new economic activities opposing the old system. All strata of Bulgarian society suffered, to a varying degree, under the burden of foreign political oppression and were aware of the need for their own Bulgarian state organization. For this reason patriotic aspirations prevailed in the Bulgarian liberation movement despite class and ideological differences. This found expression in social charity: the well-off Bulgarians donated money for the construction of schools and public buildings, the decoration of churches and monasteries, the development of their native places, the erection of water-fountains, book publication, the education of the young, etc.

By the mid-nineteenth century the Bulgarian nation already had its own intelligentsia whose members had obtained their degrees in various European universities and who had learned



from the experience of the other liberation movements on the continent. This intelligentsia began to revise the traditional national virtues in unison with the cultural upsurge of Western Europe, supplemented by the general pan-Slavic spiritual awakening. This brought in its wake the creation of inimitable works of Bulgarian art (particularly during the third quarter of the 19th century, and in iconography and church-painting as early as the beginning of the century). There were many Bulgarians among the numerous builders, icon-painters, woodcarvers and stone-masons who travelled to work in Constantinople, Jerusalem and Alexandria. Upon return to their country they constructed and decorated the tall and elegant houses, preserved to date in Plovdiv and Koprivshtitsa. In the meantime the first Bulgarian scholars obtained their degrees and began to work outside their homeland, in Russia, Romania, France and other countries. Suffice it to follow the work and progress of Spiridon Palaousov, Marin Drinov and Dr Peter Beron of Kotel (author of the *Fish Primer*) who worked in France, building his own cosmogony-panepistemology.

The Bulgarian Revival, this 'wonder of the 19th century', as Louis Leget called it, does not lend to a sketchy, diagrammatical description; it cannot be conceived as the direct result of the existing economic base, which remained but implicit. The main-spring of the potential of the nation, elevated to a maximum, was something different. The antipodes stood out clearly and when the prerequisites and conditions were at hand they brought to life titans of the mind and the cause. When a community combines its forces to overcome the factors impeding its progress, it professes an extraordinary affinity for the accomplishments of the preceding generations and the surrounding world. The maxim: 'We are in time and time is in us. We transform it and it transforms us' (Vassil Levski) holds good in this case.

The third quarter of the century was characterized by the rapid development of Bulgarian culture which, permeated by Renaissance, Enlightenment and humanistic ideas, adapted modern bourgeois conceptions of social life to regional conditions and tasks.

Most of the writers and revolutionaries of the Bulgarian

National Revival were educated in Russia, in the atmosphere and spirit of the Russian populist intelligentsia, who fought against the autocracy for a republic and a representative popular government. We must add to this the direct or oblique influence of the opposition forces in the other European countries – the semi-liberal, revolutionary-minded nobility and bourgeoisie in Poland, the republicanism of Giuseppe Mazzini, the revolutionary democratism of Giuseppe Garibaldi, Herzen, Chernishevski, Dobrolyubov and Nekrasov, of Proudhon and Bakunin, of the First International and the example set by the Paris Commune.

The preparations for the national liberation revolution began in the early '60s under the guidance of Georgi Sava Rakovski (1821-1867). The revolutionary actions of the time, the dispatching to Bulgaria across neighbouring borders of Bulgarian revolutionary *chetas* did not meet the support of the local population. The well-to-do Bulgarians were as yet reserved and hesitant.

Relatively better prospects for the Bulgarian national liberation movement opened up only at the end of the '60s and the early '70s after the Austro-Prussian war (1866) and the Franco-Prussian war (1870-1871) when the Ottoman empire lost two of its most ardent patrons (Austria and France) and Russia rejected the restrictive clauses of the 1856 Treaty of Paris and regained its status as a great power. As far as Russian foreign policy was concerned, however, the Eastern Question remained in the background during this period, too. This made it imperative for the Bulgarians to surmount the policy of temporization and accommodation towards Great Power policy and turn to active revolutionary work which would bring about the final resolution. The Bulgarian revolutionaries became aware of this necessity in time. This is shown by the way in which the great Bulgarian poet and revolutionary Hristo Botev called for 'a revolution of the people, immediate, desperate': 'Europe and the political circumstances grant freedom and independence only to those who can win it alone'.

It became apparent that armed struggle was the only way out and that the path was irreversible. It was in this spirit that an en-



tire generation of revolutionaries matured, whose humanism and uncompromising patriotism, respect for equality and freedom went hand in hand with the building of a revolutionary organization congenial to the conditions prevailing in Bulgaria. Lyuben Karavelov, the classic of Bulgarian prose-writing and publicism, complemented the initial impetus given by Georgi Rakovski with ideological substance and a sober assessment of the situation in the Balkans and in Europe from the point of view of the Bulgarian cause, while Hristo Botev, through his poetry and dazzling publicism elevated responsibility before the nation and mankind's freedom to the level of a cult. Together with other Bulgarian revolutionaries Hristo Botev enthusiastically hailed the Paris Commune and proclaimed 'The Credo of the Bulgarian Commune'. The 'God of sound judgement' was the authority for him. Unlike the pioneers of the Bulgarian Revival, who as individuals gave an impression of timidity, Hristo Botev was one of those people who came across powerfully with a clear-cut individuality of their own ('Let everyone say what he will; then I will say ...'). He was also fully aware of what the times and duty to his country demanded of him. Vassil Levski, who bred in the people confidence in their own resources, was a unique and original personification of freedom.

The Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee was set up and its programme documents mapped the way to overthrow the tyranny and outlined the structure of the future free Bulgarian state. Vassil Levski organized a network of revolutionary committees covering the whole country. In building the organization he was guided by firmly set principles, which in the course of practical revolutionary work he improved and championed: democratic centralism, internal organizational discipline, a collective method of work, criticism and self-criticism in the relations of revolutionary activists. Responsible tasks, according to Levski, should be entrusted only to people who are 'prudent, persevering, daring and magnanimous.' The Apostle of Freedom, as his coevals called him, was emphatic in saying that if only one of these virtues was missing, the organizer of 'the people's work' would be harmful to the cause. The observance of rights and freedoms of the individual were to him a sacred im-



perative prompted by the times. He signed up with the Bulgarian voluntary troops (*legia*), which were organized to help the Serbian revolutionary movement. On his second tour of the country in 1869 as a professional revolutionary he distributed propaganda pamphlets both to the Bulgarians and the Muslims. The proclamation to the working Muslims, published in Turkish, reads: 'You, brothers, too, are violated, deceived like us ... We, the Bulgarians, extend our fraternal hand to you. We have no religious disputes to settle with you. Muslims! There will be a place for all in free Bulgaria.' At the height of his activity, in early 1873, Levski was caught and hanged in Sofia. His work was continued by his adherents in the four revolutionary districts that had taken shape in the Bulgarian lands. After the settlement of policy problems and some reshuffles the Central Revolutionary Committee organized an armed uprising by the Bulgarians on both sides of the Balkan Range, in the region of Sredna Gora Mountain and in the northern parts of the Rhodopes against the oppressors. This was

## THE APRIL UPRISING OF 1876

in which the heroism of the Bulgarians reached its summit. Hristo Botev also took part in the uprising after crossing from Wallachia with a detachment of 120 revolutionaries on the Austrian boat Radezki. The uprising was brutally crushed by the Turkish regular army and *bashi-bazouk* (Turkish irregular) bands. Some 29 thousand Bulgarians perished in the unequal struggle.

The April Uprising was the best organized mass armed popular action against the oppressor in the last quarter of the 19th century, after the Paris Commune. At this time in Western Europe the process of the creation of national states and the extension of the democratic rights in them had, generally speaking, come to a close. On the one side stood the independent countries and, on the other, the colonies and semi-dependent regions. The working class in Western Europe had made the first steps towards becoming a class in its own right. The bourgeoisie

had passed its zenith and its revolutionary substance in the major capitalist countries was wearing out. In this intervening period, by force of objective circumstances, as a result of the uneven development of capitalism as a world system, the centre of the world revolutionary movement gradually moved from Western Europe to the East. It is from here that the great significance of the Bulgarian national liberation movement of the '70s and its peak – the April Uprising – derives. One nation, daring appeared on the European political scene with the motto 'Freedom or a heroic death', challenging the rest of the world, putting to the test all adherents of liberalism and the opponents of the increasing conservatism among the ruling circles of the European bourgeoisie. And the impact was really surprising: over 3,000 publications in the European press voiced support for the insurgent Bulgarians. In this situation the governments of the Great Powers were in no position to overtly maintain the status quo as regards 'the sick man', the Ottoman empire. This created a congenial political situation and made possible a more decisive intervention on the part of Russia.

The *Constantinople Conference*, called at the end of 1876 and the beginning of 1877 under the pressure of Russia, attended by delegates from Russia, Great Britain, Germany, France, Austria-Hungary, Italy and Turkey, worked out a draft-plan for the creation of an autonomous Bulgarian province, which incorporated the lands between the Danube and the Balkan Range, part of Thrace and the whole of Macedonia. With the assistance of Great Britain, the Porte rejected the draft in full. The Conference failed to reach any definite decision. Its convocation, however, proved that all Great Powers recognized the urgency of the Bulgarian national issue. Soon afterwards

## RUSSIA DECLARED WAR ON TURKEY

In order to appreciate the role Russia played in this moment, which was so fateful to an entire people, it suffices to mention that no other country either then or later even planned to put pressure on the Porte to relieve the lot of the Bulgarians. Parallel



to the mobilization called by Russia, the Bulgarian Central Charity Society (an organization of the Bulgarian national liberation movement) launched a campaign for rallying volunteers, and 7500 Bulgarians responded to its appeal. With them the Russian Command formed the *Bulgarian volunteer force* under the command of General N. Stoletov. The Russian army crossed the Danube from Wallachia at the end of June. Romanian troops fought in the war together with the Russians. For the next eight months the war followed a path of dramatic ups and downs. The Bulgarians assisted the Russian troops as scouts, guides and aides in the army supply and transport units. Some 50 *chetas* and armed peasant detachments disrupted the Turkish rear. After the bloody battle of the Bulgarian volunteers and the Russian troops near the southern Bulgarian town of Stara Zagora came the battles in the Shipka Pass of the Balkan Range. At Shipka at the end of August Russian troops and the Bulgarian volunteer force (some 6000 men) braved and resisted the onslaught of a 27,000-strong Turkish army. The town of Pleven – the greatest Turkish stronghold in Northern Bulgaria – surrendered in late November 1877. Following this the Russians pressed to the south of the Balkan Range. At the battle of Sheinovo (Kazanluk district) 22,000 Turkish troops and officers surrendered with 83 cannon, after casualties amounting to thousands.

200,000 Russian servicemen and 4,500 Romanians perished in the Bulgarian war of liberation, while 150,000 Bulgarians lost their lives in the course of the military hostilities. This shows the great extent to which the Porte tried to keep its hold on the Bulgarian lands, although in the long run it was forced to go into retreat.

From the multiple descriptions of this war here we shall quote but an excerpt from the Memoirs of George Washburne (a long-time Principal of Robert College in Constantinople, at which many Bulgarians received their education): Countless carts, crammed with Muslim exiles travelled along the road from Plovdiv to Istanbul. General Skobelev, the commander of the advance Russian troops, attempted to contact them and to assure them that they had nothing to fear, but they never stopped firing.



The general commanded his troops to a stop to let the train of exile carts go on its way in peace. When they continued on their way, however, the Cossacks of General Stoletov came across Turkish infants and young children abandoned by their own parents by the roadside, as a cumbersome burden in their frantic flight. The Russian soldiers took the babies and children and later left them with the people of a roadside Turkish village. The signing of the San Stefano peace treaty, Washburne goes on, 'brought great comfort both to the city and the College, although we had to give sympathy to the exhausted Turkish exiles from Bulgaria. It turned out that we had to feed and clothe those same people who two years before had mercilessly slaughtered the Bulgarians. Multitudinous crowds camped by the College and to this day continue to be our neighbours (Washburne wrote his Memoirs in 1907) relying on our compassion. Most of them bitterly repented the brutal acts they had perpetrated in Bulgaria and thought that their sufferings were but a judgement from on high. The majority of them were kind-hearted people, though extremely ignorant. A certain number of them returned to Bulgaria.'

*The San Stefano peace treaty* turned all Bulgarian-populated lands into an autonomous principality. The Great Powers, however, rescinded the treaty and imposed a new one, concocted in Berlin, under which a section of the liberated territory was returned to Turkey, and the rest was split into two: the principality of Bulgaria (the area around Sofia and the territory to the north of the Balkan Range) and Eastern Rumelia (the other part of Bulgaria lying to the south of the Balkan Range) which was made a Turkish tributary. Serbia, in addition, was given lands with purely Bulgarian population and was deprived of pure Serbian territory. Austria-Hungary was given formal rights over Dalmatia, occupied Bosnia, Herzegovina and the district of Novi Pazar, thus adding a total of 55,000 sq. km of new territory of Slav population. Great Britain, with the approval of the Porte, received the Island of Cyprus.

What was won in blood was dismembered in ink.

The construction of the new Bulgarian state began with the help of the *Provisional Russian Administration*. The Russian oc-

cupation gave military training to the Bulgarians in the gymnastic societies, an unofficial but efficient way of rendering help towards the self-defence of the Bulgarian nationality in Southern Bulgaria. Owing to this, in 1885, seven years after the Treaty of Berlin, the Bulgarians united at their own initiative the two parts of the country.

Under the guidance of the Provisional Russian Administration all was done in the course of several post-war months to bring life back to normal. Reconstruction began, as did road and bridge construction, and the installment of a communications network. The Russians presented Bulgaria with several ships as a basis for her Danube and Black Sea fleets. They also assisted the setting up of printing shops, publishing houses and newspapers in North and South Bulgaria (before the war the Turkish authorities had banned the setting up of printing shops on Bulgarian territory). The Constitution of the country was worked out also with the help of the Provisional Russian Administration. The Turnovo Constitution (effective from April 1879 to December 4, 1947) was the result of the victory of the Liberal Party over the Conservative Party at the Constituent Assembly at Veliko Turnovo. Thus Bulgaria became a democratic, constitutional monarchy. The monarchy was imposed upon the Bulgarian people by the Treaty of Berlin. The Bulgarian monarch, in close alliance with the big bourgeoisie, gradually extended his prerogatives until after World War II, when the monarchy was abolished after a national plebiscite in 1946. Prince Alexander Battenberg made the first somewhat timid attempts at this, while King Ferdinand I and King Boris III monopolized power to a great extent.

In its objective results the Russo-Turkish War led to a successful conclusion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the new Bulgarian state, whose territory in 1885 covered 95,346 sq. km and whose population numbered about 3 million. Sofia was named the capital of the country by the Constituent Assembly in Turnovo. The physical terror and plundering of foreign domination had disappeared. The economic situation of the Bulgarians engaged in industrial and agricultural production could not, however, be said to have improved measurably. It



soon became apparent that the land obtained through the agrarian reform was in most cases too small and insufficient to support a whole family by. The mass of poor people moved to the towns, while the land was bought up by the more wealthy. The crafts collapsed, unable to keep up with West European industrial competition and as a result of restrictive customs tariffs, which cut off the once widely accessible markets of the Balkans and Central Europe. The traditions of the Bulgarian Revival were still alive in the educated Bulgarians who, in the then-prevailing conditions, had no trouble finding employment in the new state apparatus or in educational or cultural work. These public-spirited Bulgarians generally stuck to the ideas of liberalism and had the broad support of the mass of small-time producers. This movement was represented by the Liberal Party, whose most outstanding representatives were P.R. Slaveikov, Petko Karavelov and Dragan Tsankov. In contrast to this the wealthy Bulgarians, the big merchants who had returned to Bulgaria from Constantinople or Bucharest, the new war-rich purveyors and speculators advanced the idea of granting limited rights to the people. The Conservative Party became their mouthpiece (D. Grekov, Todor Ikonov and Konstantin Stoilov).

It was only by the end of the 19th century that the typical ways of

## THE INITIAL ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL

began to set in: contracting, money-lending, embezzlement of public funds, land speculation, foreign trade deals, etc. A large number of big dealers in farm produce, usurers, landowners and landlords grew up from the ranks of the pre-war rich Bulgarians. The formation of the industrial bourgeoisie started in the second half of the 1890s. Bourgeois class organizations were also set up (stable political parties, organizations such as the Union of Bulgarian Industrialists, etc.).

The development of industry, trade and banking in rural and backward Bulgaria, after centuries of foreign oppression, depended almost in full on the enterprise, the protection and the



aid of the state, which was the reason why all bourgeois parties fawned upon the king, deviating from the party programme principles. Political power gave birth to the Bulgarian bourgeoisie, which singled out from among its ranks the leaders of the political parties, such as Konstantin Stoilov and Mihaïl Madjarov of the Popular Party, Alexander Malinov of the Democratic Party, Stefan Stambolov, Vassil Radoslavov and Dimitar Petkov of the various Liberal factions, etc. These parties did not have a stable membership; it actually fluctuated from one to the other, depending on which one of them was in power. The skirmishes for more parliamentary seats fanned bribes, demagoguery and unscrupulousness.

The progress of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie was accompanied by economic bondage to the Western countries. Foreign capital (German, French, Belgian and mixed) penetrated intensively into Bulgaria, especially between 1905 and 1912 and between 1919 and 1928. The development of capitalist relations brought Bulgaria a certain amount of economic and political prosperity. By the turn of the century the country caught up with and, in certain industrial branches, even outstripped the neighbouring Balkan countries. Dozens of new industrial enterprises were commissioned —textile, beer and liquor brewing, leather-tanning and fur-making and the transport system doubled in size. By force of a number of objective circumstances the Bulgarian bourgeoisie failed to grow into a political and economic power. In their foreign policy the often superseding governments and the king resorted to various deals seeking the support of a great power to help attain the national unification of the Bulgarians. These governments did, however, take some relatively independent steps such as the Unification of Bulgaria in 1885 and, later on

## THE 1908 DECLARATION OF BULGARIA'S INDEPENDENCE

This political act nullified the harmful clauses of the Treaty of Berlin under which the greater part of the railway lines in Southern Bulgaria were under the regimen of capitulations (as

Turkey's property) which entailed the payment of an annual tax to Turkey.

Parallel to this, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Serbian bourgeoisie for its part pushed south to Macedonia.

After the Treaty of Berlin (1878) Macedonia remained under Ottoman rule, while after the wars and the peace treaties (Bucharest, 1913, and Neuilly, 1919) the greater part of it was incorporated into Serbia and Greece. The idea of the national unification of the Bulgarians was fatally doomed, mostly by the policy of the imperialist diktat. The Ottoman rulers were pushed out of Macedonia and Adrianople Thrace not by means of a democratic revolution but through Bulgaria's, Serbia's, Greece's and Montenegro's military might in 1912. In the division of the liberated territories, however, Bulgaria found herself all alone against her neighbours. The Second Balkan War reduced to a minimum Bulgaria's territorial gains. This is known as the *first national disaster* in Bulgarian history. With even more catastrophic consequences for Bulgaria was her involvement in the First World War (September 1, 1915 – end of September, 1918). After having fought on the side of the Central Powers (Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary) she was stripped of more territories and was forced to pay reparations to the tune of thousands of millions of gold francs. Tens of thousands of Bulgarian soldiers died in the war and 40 per cent of the country's transport was worn out. Famine and diseases also took a heavy toll in the war and post-war period.

Increasing numbers of refugees streamed into Bulgaria, just like after any armed conflict on the Balkans. Their accommodation in the country became a chronic problem.

The adventurist policy of the king and the ruling bourgeois cabinets was only one of the causes that led to the tragedy. The figures cited above give just one side of the picture, because the physical and psychical traumas suffered by individual people and society as a whole have no quantitative dimension. Capitalism had demonstrated its predatory nature, causing bloodshed, evil and misery not just to one nation or another, but to all peoples. The Balkans became known as 'the smoking peninsula', which at



the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century frequently shook with armed conflicts and hostilities and in the second decade of the 20th century became a theatre of war. The loss in material resources and human life would have sufficed, in its money costs, to gild the disputed territories.

In this situation the working people became aware, to a varying degree, of their interests and were no longer willing 'to pick the nuts out of the fire' and be the ones who always suffered. In the four decades after the liberation from Ottoman domination Bulgaria attained no more than a mean level of capitalist development. There were no large-scale industrial enterprises. In the 1920s, however, the bourgeois state engaged the active part of the Bulgarians in its biggest enterprise – the war. This offered good opportunities for contacts between the working people and for the growth of disillusionment with capitalist society. Sections of the Bulgarian society which had formerly been sceptical to revolutionary and Marxist propaganda became susceptible to socialist ideas. These were major objective prerequisites for the revolutionizing of the majority of Bulgarians. Left-wing forces gained in influence and role, particularly the party of the left-wing Socialists, which after the war named itself the Communist Party and joined the Third International. This party, to quote the independent newspaper 'Champion', published in Roussé (April 4, 1919) was the 'only remaining reserve of democracy'. We could also add – the last word of history.

The founder of the socialist movement in Bulgaria, Dimitar Blagoev (1856-1924) in his teens was influenced by the atmosphere of the National Revival period, and by the great Bulgarian poet, educator and enlightener Petko Slaveikov and painter Nikolai Pavlovich. He became involved in public activities in the early 1880s, while a student at St Petersburg University in Russia. In the Russian capital he matured with Marx's *Das Kapital* and while still under the influence of populist ideas and those of Proudhon and Lassale, he created the first social democratic group in Russia, called a party, with its press organ, the *Rabochii* (Worker) newspaper. Extradited in 1885 by the Russian Czarist government, Blagoev returned to



his homeland, settled in Sofia and began to propagate socialist ideas. These activities coincided with the first labour strikes in Bulgaria. Under his guidance and leadership the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party was formed in 1891 and the foundations of the class trade-union movement were laid in 1904. Under the leadership of Blagoev's party, the party of the left-wing Socialists and the General Workers Trade Union Alliance related to it, a revolutionary trade union organization, 557 industrial actions by 32,000 workers took place over the period 1904-1911. Georgi Dimitrov, talented trade union leader and Party activist (1882-1949) and ex-printing worker, was greatly instrumental in the expansion of the class struggle. The leadership of the party of the working class included specialists who had degrees from universities in Western Europe and Russia and had sound political experience. This was the most highly public-spirited section of the nation in the postwar period which kept in pace with the times and took upon themselves the task of combining scientific socialism with the practice of the workers' movement.

The cooperative movement came into existence in the 1890s in agriculture, commerce and among the urban workers and craftsmen.

The Bulgarian Agrarian Party (BZNS), founded in 1899, also earned its place on the political scene. This was the only agrarian party in Europe at the time not to duplicate the programmes of other bourgeois parties. Moreover, its underlying principle was to safeguard the interests of small and middle peasants from the exploiting designs of big business and the state.

The anti-capitalist leanings of the majority of the Bulgarians already during the first two decades of the century was contingent on the development of Bulgaria itself and that of the Balkans, as well as on the deepening conflicts within the capitalist system, which made social revolution inevitable. The Party of the left-wing Socialists and the Bulgarian Agrarian Party soon won the confidence and trust of the majority of the workers and peasants in city and country, which can be seen in the election results. The revolutionary Marxist party of the working class

carried with landslide victories the elections for municipal councils, after which *municipal communes* were set up in many towns and villages. The first two communes were proclaimed in the towns of Dryanovo (1894) and Samokov (1910). In the ensuing period until 1934 the left-wing Socialists carried the municipal elections and formed communes in dozens of towns and villages. For instance, 37 city and 232 village communes and 152 communist boards of school trustees came into existence over the period 1919-1923. The ruling circles naturally were hostile to the communes and dismantled them by force. It was precisely under the influence of the Party of left-wing Socialists that the soldiers' mutinies of 1913, during the Second Balkan War, flared up. V. I. Lenin expressed special interest in these mutinies when he expounded the theory of the possibility of turning the imperialist war into a civil war, into a revolution.

If the Leninist stage of the development of Marxism was the stage of the direct binding of theory with revolutionary practice, then we must say that the Bulgarian revolutionary Marxists passed successfully the austere test of history. They realized already in their day the significance for the whole of humanity of the breakthrough in the system of imperialism achieved by the Russian proletariat and gave their unqualified support to the Great October Socialist Revolution. Their affinity for the changes taking place in the world derived not only from their collaboration with the Russian revolutionary movement since the university years of Dimiter Blagoev in St Petersburg, and the personal contacts of the Bulgarian Socialists with the Russian revolutionary Marxists, the Bolsheviks, and their leader V. I. Lenin, but above all from the purposeful course of their work in accordance with the conditions prevailing in their own country and their firm belief that this was the right course to lead them to victory.

By the end of the First World War no one and nothing was able to prevent the surge of revolution. In September, 1918 the soldiers who had left the south-western front stood up in revolt to



call to account the rulers who were to blame for the defeat. This was the so-called

## VLADAYA UPRISING

which proclaimed a Republic in the town of Radomir (south-western Bulgaria) headed by the leaders of the Bulgarian Agrarian Party Alexander Stamboliiski and Raiko Daskalov. Sofia garrison troops and German troops stationed on stand-by in Sofia routed with artillery the uprising at the village of Vladaya.

In the post-war years, the BZNS won great popularity as a party opposing the King's policies and those of the big bourgeoisie. The party set up, after an election victory, a coalition government and later its own cabinet and government from 1920 to 1923. Alexander Stamboliiski and his party directed their first policy actions against big business (a special organization expropriated grain trade from the big dealers) and the big landowners (through an agrarian reform). Labour service was instituted as well as compulsory primary education, the legal system was improved, etc.

The bourgeoisie joined forces against the Agrarian Party and the military were mobilized, some of them adopting the postulates of Italian fascists. For obvious reasons the Bulgarian fascists endeavoured to make their mark with help 'from above', with the support of the palace, the party of the big bourgeoisie (the Constitutional Bloc) and the nationalist-minded officers. Along with the Constitutional Bloc there came into being one more centre of legal opposition – the Popular Unity Party (Naroden Sgovor) under the leadership of Prof. Alexander Tsankov, which united nationalistic intellectuals, officers and big business. These two parties differed in their attitude to the problems of Bulgaria's further political development, their common ground being their social origins and the idea that the BZNS could be removed from power through political violence. On the night of June 9, 1923, the conspirators dealt their lightning blow on the capital. In response to this an uprising broke out in Southern Bulgaria, but it was quickly crushed and Alexander Stamboliiski was brutally tortured to death. The Agrarians in the town and district of



Pleven, led by the Communist Assen Halachev, put up massive resistance.

These events revealed unambiguously what class interests amounted to, they disclosed the diktat of big business and the army-supported terror, violating bourgeois laws and political regulations.

In response to this onslaught by big business the Communist Party, in a united front with the BZNS, organized the masses to rise in arms in September 1923 in the

## ARMED ANTI-FASCIST UPRISING

Its headquarters, under Georgi Dimitrov and Vassil Kolarov, was stationed in North-Western Bulgaria, where the struggle was fought on the largest scale and for longest. In Southern Bulgaria, insurgents led by Communist Party activist Petko Enev took the town of Nova Zagora. Workers' and peasant rule was established in many towns and villages. The uprising, however, was crushed in blood: 20,000 Communists and Agrarians were killed and tens of thousands were imprisoned or fled the country. Fascist dictatorship was established in the country.

In 1924 the Communist Party was compelled to retreat and gave up its policy of armed revolt. It was banned and for the following twenty years continued the struggle underground. The Communist Party sustained a particularly heavy blow in 1925 when many of its cadres and progressive intellectuals were put to death without trial.

In the context of the ensuing relative stabilization of capitalism, the new Democratic Alliance cabinet showed a certain flexibility and manoeuvring in its internal policy. In this period industrial and agricultural output caught up with and outstripped pre-war levels. The process of the centralization of industrial and financial capital (nine financial-industrial associations ran the entire Bulgarian economy) continued.

The foreign policy of Bulgaria in the late '20s and until the beginning of World War II was one of cautiously awaiting a propitious time for the revision of the Neuilly Peace Treaty. An attempt was made by all governments to maintain good

relations with their neighbours and the Great Powers. In the early '30s, the neo-fascist bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties (the Democratic, the Liberal and the Radical) stepped up their activities, won the elections and put in the Popular Alliance cabinet. In 1934 it was removed from power by a military coup d'état. The new cabinet of Kimon Georgiev established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, and attempted to orient the country towards France. Having been in power only for a year this cabinet attempted to institute an elitarian regime in which the King played an inferior role. This speeded the transition to an

## OPEN MONARCHO-FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

King Boris III and the extreme political reactionary wing prevailed, erecting a barrier to any democratic leanings. The palace and its puppet governments leaned on a bureaucratic apparatus, the army, the police and the state-controlled trade unions. Parliamentarism became a farce, and the National Assembly degenerated into a rubber-stamp body.

In March 1941 Bulgaria joined the Axis. In December, the government declared an allegedly 'symbolic' war on Britain and the US.

In these conditions, some of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties and factions ceased to exist. Three political wings became manifest during the war, albeit not always as well-organized bodies; these were the wing of the monarcho-fascist dictatorship, of the legal bourgeois and petty-bourgeois opposition, and of the underground or partially legal anti-fascist opposition. The Communist Party, the left-wing factions of the BZNS and the Socialist Party, together with the Zveno Political Circle, headed by Kimon Georgiev, which had shifted leftwards after 1935, formed the Fatherland Front which was to play an important role in the anti-fascist struggle. The experienced and tested subjective factor played a leading role in that struggle. In the wake of the October Revolution, many Bulgarian communists became activists of the international workers' and com-



munist movement. There were Bulgarians in the leadership of the Third Communist International. Bulgaria's communists did not stand aside from any international campaign of support for the Soviet Union, of resistance to fascism and for democratic freedoms either before or during the war. The professional revolutionary and Comintern activist Georgi Dimitrov set a personal example of communist courage and adherence to principles in moments of hardship, achieving a moral triumph over fascism at the Leipzig Trial, in which he was framed for setting the Reichstag on fire. Once released, he became the leader of the Third Communist International in 1935, guiding the powerful united- and popular-front movement which would have an overwhelming effect on all subsequent major international developments. Bulgarian communists fought fascism in Spain; during World War II, there were Bulgarians in practically every resistance movement in Europe.

The subjective factor did what was best for bringing together all national anti-fascist forces in Bulgaria. Going deep underground, the Bulgarian Communist Party did not suspend its activities for a single moment, applying legal forms of action and combining them skilfully with conspiratorial forms, thus proving as indestructible as life itself. During the inter-war period, it exercised a dominating presence, its ideas permeating deep among the workers and the other labouring people. No special legislation and no censorship proved capable of suppressing its numerous publications in various fields of social science, in art and literature, which facilitated the shaping of an entire generation of anti-fascists.

In 1942, the radio station Hristo Botev, broadcasting from outside Bulgaria, announced the *Programme of the Fatherland Front*, which envisaged the most necessary steps: getting out of the Axis which had proved fatal to Bulgaria, the liquidation of the monarchy, and the restoration of democratic rights and freedoms in the country.

Having started immediately after the nazi invasion of the USSR, the underground armed struggle against the nazi troops quartered in Bulgaria and their Bulgarian servants assumed a particularly broad scale in 1943 and 1944. In 1943, the Communist



Party headed the setting up of the People's Liberation Insurgent Army (NOVA). Bulgaria was divided into 12 insurgents' operative zones, each one with its own headquarters. By the summer of 1944, the insurgents' active forces included one division, 13 partisan brigades and over 40 detachments, several *chetas* and hundreds of subversion groups, bringing NOVA membership to 30,000 fighters. These were chiefly members of the Communist Party and its Youth League. The partisans' regular aides alone numbered 200,000. These NOVA units carried out over 3,000 combat and subversion operations.

This was a battle front in the nazi rear. The partisans' operations engaged not only the gendarmerie that had been set up especially to deal with them, but a regular army of several hundred thousand as well, which would otherwise have been placed by the fascist authorities at the service of the nazi high command.

The moment long awaited for came at last. The Soviet Army entered the Balkans. Following the Yash-Kishinev Operation, the troops of the Third Ukrainian Front reached Bulgaria's frontier in late August, 1944. A government of representatives of the non-fascist bourgeois opposition with a pro-Western orientation was formed as a last attempt to save the bourgeois system in the country. However, the Communist Party's Central Committee issued a timely directive for bringing down the monarcho-fascist government. The country was swept by strikes and anti-fascist demonstrations, which grew into an armed uprising.

Bulgaria had ripened for a turnabout in her development. The external factor proved favourable this time, too: through its foreign policy moves, the Soviet Union helped bring about a relatively painless and practically bloodless liquidation of fascist rule in the country, and a solution to the main contradiction, that between labour and capital, after which the vanguard of the Bulgarian working class could rely on a support of the overwhelming majority of the nation.

The anti-fascist forces dealt the main blow on the capital on the night of September 9th, 1944. The bourgeois government of

K. Mouraviev was overthrown. On

## THE NINTH OF SEPTEMBER, 1944

the Premier of the newly-formed government of the Fatherland Front, Kimon Georgiev, declared the establishment of people's democratic power. This marked *the First Day of the socialist revolution in Bulgaria*, foreshadowed by the mass anti-fascist struggle of the preceding period. The uprising caused the downfall of a rule which defended the interests of part of the non-fascist upper middle class, middle class and petty bourgeoisie, striving to preserve the capitalist supremacy in the country with the aid of the Western powers. Thus the first step towards resolving the basic contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie had been taken. Though the people's democracy revived some of the principles of bourgeois democracy, it was not just the antipode of the fascist dictatorship. Rather, it was a higher stage in comparison to bourgeois democracy, for it provided peaceful means for carrying out the thorough reconstruction of the society and its transition to a new socio-economic formation. This was gradually realized under the leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party after the victory of the uprising of September 9. In view of that, the established people's democratic rule as a form of the proletarian dictatorship represented a union of the broad people's masses and parties in their efforts to pave the way for building socialism in Bulgaria.

The government of the Fatherland Front issued a programme on September 17th, 1944, which envisaged: the restoration of constitutional rights; reorganization of the state in accordance with the freely expressed will of the people; purging the state apparatus of anti-popular elements; actual freedom of worship and religious tolerance; free access to education for the broad popular masses. At the same time, a number of anti-capitalist reforms were introduced in the economy – the confiscation of property and capital gained through profiteering and speculation, the abolition of private business monopolies and privileges, etc. The main tools of violence of the fascist state had been destroyed during the uprising and shortly after it, and new administrative political bodies were created. The basic functions of the new state power and government were organically linked



and interwoven with the activities and functions of the committees of the Fatherland Front. The National Committee of the Front united representatives of the ruling political parties and mass organizations.

Immediately after coming into power, the government of the Fatherland Front declared war on Germany, signing a truce with the countries of the anti-nazi coalition – the USSR, Great Britain and the USA. Under the conditions of this truce, parts of the Bulgarian army, in combined operations with the Soviet Army, fought for the liberation of Yugoslavian, Hungarian and Austrian territories from German occupation. The patriotic war of the Bulgarian people was a natural continuation of its armed struggle against the dictatorship of the fascist monarchy and German fascism. Over 32,000 Bulgarians were wounded or killed at the front.

The development of the revolution eliminated the temporary allies from the social base of people's democracy. The forces of the working class and the other social groups focused on the major tasks facing the nation: broad democratization of politics, economic restoration, the conclusion of a peace treaty, and Bulgaria's new foreign-policy orientation.

Bulgaria preserved her pre-war borders, and her territory of some 111, 000 sq. km under the 1947 Treaty of Paris. It was within these borders that the country's seven million-strong population began to shape a new type of nation, the Bulgarian socialist nation, which, by the time of the 1978 census, had come to number 8,805,462.

The Bulgarian people had been greatly eroded by the trials and tribulations of history. Emigration characterized the entire period of Ottoman domination. Many Bulgarians were left outside the country's borders laid down in the 1878 Treaty of Berlin. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, many Bulgarians, especially from the Turnovo area, worked over the summer as market gardeners in Romania, Austria-Hungary, Russia and elsewhere in Europe. Many of them settled in these countries, for instance, in the vicinities of Bucharest, Budapest and Bratislava. From the outset of the 20th century, and especially at the time of the Great Depression of 1929-1933 a con-



siderable number of Bulgarians left the country to earn their living in Western Europe, in North America (Canada and the United States), South America (Argentina), and in Australia. Very many of them took up permanent residence in those countries. At the same time Bulgarians whose native lands remained outside the boundaries of Bulgaria took refuge in Bulgaria. In the period between 1880 and 1977, 806,000 people settled in Bulgaria, and 1,216,253 people migrated to other countries. During these 98 years, Bulgaria lost over 471, 000 of its inhabitants due to migration processes. In sum, during the five wars in which Bulgaria was involved over the period 1880-1945, the country suffered the loss of 180, 000 killed or missing, and 250, 000 wounded and invalids. As a result of these wars, due to the lower birth-rate and higher mortality, the country lost a population of 150, 000. (All data quoted here have been published in a summary by Prof. Dr Anastas Totev.) From a demographic point of view, present-day Bulgaria is an ethnically monolithic country with minorities comprising less than 10 per cent of the whole population.

The average life span of the Bulgarian population is marking a constant increase: from 39 years in 1910 and 51 years in 1935, it rose to 69 years in 1960, reaching 71 in 1975 (the average life expectancy for men being 69 years, and for women 73 years ). It is more important, however, that in the course of the socialist revolution, many improvements in the quality of living standard of the Bulgarian nation have been achieved and are still being achieved today. Today there is no Bulgarian of advanced age who has spared his efforts during the postwar period of restoration (September 1944 to 1948), or in laying the foundations of socialism (1948-58), in the following accelerated socio-economic development through which Bulgaria became a modern industrial-agrarian country, or in building the developed socialist society according to the new *Programme of the BCP*, adopted at its Tenth Congress in 1971. Since 1948 Bulgaria has been developing in accordance with five-year plans, based on sound theoretical principles. This period of construction is linked with the constantly increasing role of the Communist Party, which has become the acknowledged leader of the people. That fact is

reflected in the new Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, adopted through a nation-wide referendum in 1971. In carrying out its activities, the Bulgarian Communist Party relies on the support of the Bulgarian Agrarian Party as the second party in power, of the Fatherland Front as a socio-political organization and popular movement, of the trade unions, of the Young Communist League, of the art unions, relies on the mental capacities and talent of the millions of workers of the socialist society.

In respect to the contemporary history of Bulgaria, great significance is attached to the decisions of the *Fifth Congress of the BCP* (1948) and of the *April Plenum of the Party* (1956). The first forum worked out the strategy of the party in realizing the transition to socialism in Bulgaria and the establishment of the socialist order as a fully developed social system. The April Plenum discussed the problems of the next important stage—the completion of the material and technical basis of socialism, the development and the optimum efficiency of the system. These provisions of the Plenum have been further developed in the Programme of the Bulgarian Communist Party. The results are evident: social homogeneity of the nation has been achieved, the motto of 'One for all and all for one' has found its realization, conditions for work have been created for every Bulgarian, so that he can claim with pride: 'This world is also mine!' Bulgarians are aware of and enjoy a reality, in which the means of production and the achievements of scientific and technical progress are at the disposal of the whole of society.

The 2, 273 private enterprises which were nationalized at the end of 1947 had to be re-grouped according to industrial department and in 1948 their number was reduced to 813. In this way, over the next few years, the production potential of the former privately-owned capitalist enterprises was utilized to the full with the infusion of small funds only, while these same enterprises had operated in 1944 at half-capacity. In the modern sense industrialization was effected in the ensuing socialist construction, in pursuance of the guidelines set by the Fifth Congress of the BCP and the directives given by Georgi Dimitrov. Hundreds of new enterprises were built, a heavy industry with its basic sectors



was set up and new industrial centres and regions appeared, changing the face of the country. National industrial output in 1968 was 30 times that of 1939, and the manufacture of means of production was 70 times greater than in 1939. Heavy industry became the leader in the development of the Bulgarian economy. Further industrialization provided for the building of the material and technical base of the new society and the transition to the next stage, the construction of a developed socialist society.

It took Bulgaria, a country known prior to World War II as 'part of the European agrarian belt', which stretched from the Baltic to the Aegean, less than two decades to develop into an industrial-agrarian country. To realize how this translates into real terms we shall recall here that a third of the citizens of capitalist Bulgaria lived in the conditions of overpopulation, 82 per cent of the country's active population worked the 12 million plots of arable land with no farming machinery and was in constant trouble making both ends meet.

The radical reforms in the agricultural structure of the country were implemented in two stages. The small plots of land were pooled in 3,290 cooperative farms in 1958, after which they were amalgamated. This was followed by the stage of consolidation, integration and specialization, which resulted in the formation of 163 agro-industrial complexes, each with an arable area of from – 15,- to 40,000 hectares and equipped with the necessary up-to-date technology. The agro-industrial complexes deal with farming and all industrial activities directly related to farming. Industrial integration was carried out mainly in the sphere of industrial crops – sugar, beet and tobacco. Gross agricultural produce in 1979 was three times that of 1939. Thus the number of people employed in agriculture has been reduced three times, releasing manpower for industry and the other branches of the economy. Over the last few years agriculture has been run by the National Agro-Industrial Union, a public-state organ, and not by a Ministry as in former years.

1, 350, 000 people are currently employed in industry. The ratio between industrial and agricultural output now stands at 84:16. The main body of industry is made up of the most progressive branches such as: power generation – electric power



production in 1979 reached 32, 500 kWh, or 120 times as much as in 1939; metallurgy — Bulgaria is among the world's 20 top-ranking countries in non-ferrous metal production; mechanical and electrical engineering, electronics and chemistry. If in 1956 these branches accounted for 19 per cent of total industrial output, then in 1979 they exceeded 45. 5 per cent. Industrial goods made up 92. 2 per cent (74. 3 per cent of non-agricultural origin) of the total volume of Bulgaria's exports. Over the last 15-20 years, under the designs of Bulgarian architects and with the participation of Bulgarian experts, new housing estates, industrial and public buildings, bridges, dams, roads, etc., have been built in a number of countries in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Bulgaria is presently one of the 19 countries which account for 90 per cent of the world's trade turnover. The quoted statistics, and others, show that no other country in the world, similar in proportions to Bulgaria, has ever scored such great achievements over such a brief period of time. Without the support and assistance of the socialist community countries, particularly of the Soviet Union, our country would not have been able to make this giant leap forward in industrialization and the modernization of agriculture.

The People's Republic of Bulgaria is also *very active in its foreign trade*. It maintains trade contacts with 112 countries, while capitalist Bulgaria did so with only 52 countries. Nearly 80 per cent of Bulgaria's trade is realized with the socialist countries and over 55 per cent with the Soviet Union. A primary place is allotted to Bulgaria's industrial cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other member-countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, with neighbouring Romania, Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia. Trade with a number of industrially advanced countries such as West Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, Austria, Japan, Canada, etc., is also being promoted. Economic contacts with the developing countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America are being further expanded. Bulgaria maintains active trade with India, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Libya, Algeria, Angola, Ethiopia and Mozambique.

This proceeds from Bulgaria's enthusiastic and persistent policy of mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries and peoples, for making the process of détente irreversible. While before World War II Bulgaria maintained diplomatic relations with 30 countries only, Bulgaria now has diplomatic contacts with more than 90 countries and is an active member of the United Nations.

The domestic aspect of the country has also been transformed. Bulgaria is currently among the leading countries within the CMEA and on a world scale in the rates of national income growth. The real incomes of the population over the sixth five-year plan period (the first half of the '70s) have gone up by 32.4 per cent; social consumption funds, securing free education and medical aid, retirement security, an increase in the number of child-care establishments, vacation homes, etc., grew by 47.8 per cent. The programme of the Communist Party for raising the living standards of the working people, adopted as Law by the National Assembly in 1973, is being persistently implemented despite difficulties caused by economic crises in various regions of the world. The prevailing portion of the national income goes to consumption. The consumption fund per person increased fivefold over 1953-1979. The augmented nominal and real incomes are an indicator of the improved living standards. In 1979 nominal incomes went up 4.6-fold and real ones—4 times compared to 1952, average annual wages being four times bigger than in 1948. Presently all working people in Bulgaria are covered by state pension security (2 million pensions are issued in Bulgaria).

The difference between city and country, industrial and agricultural labour is being overcome. The residential network has also been reconstructed through the creation of so-called *settlement systems* and taking into account a balanced distribution of the country's manpower potential to meet the needs of these systems.

It is not so much the process of urbanization (in 1978 urban population figures made up nearly 60 per cent of the country's total, while in 1880 comparable figures stood at 19 per cent) that is indicative of the radical transformation of Bulgarian society,



as is the transformation of the way of life and thinking, the raised cultural standards of industrial workers and particularly of the peasants. The American sociologist Roger Wittecker, who made a research of two Bulgarian villages in 1975 and 1976, was impressed by the statement of one of the men he polled: 'Today there are many young people in the Bulgarian villages, but peasants are only the elderly and the old,' which means that the better part of the village people live and think in a city manner. The findings of his research, published simultaneously in *Slavic Review* in the USA and in *Problems of Sociology* (No. 4, 1979) covered the village of Dragalevtsi, formerly a mountain village, presently a mountain suburb of Sofia, and the village of Obnova, Pleven district, a typical open-country village. What is most interesting is that in 1934 the village of Dragalevtsi was the object of the first research of its kind by another American professor, Erwin Sanders, called '*A Balkan Village*'. Thus Roger Wittecker had 'the unique opportunity' of comparing the data on Dragalevtsi from two periods, to witness the changes that had taken place during the intervening four decades. He emphasizes on the ways in which two distant villages, which in 1944 had 'one apparently common characteristic, are now involved in the same processes'. The sociologist studies changes from the point of view of the classical rural attributes which were common both to the villagers from Dragalevtsi and those from the village of Obnova prior to World War II, namely:

- 1) A strong attachment to the land they owned.
- 2) A narrow village social orientation— provincial village social atmosphere.
- 3) Unsusceptibility to city culture and strong suspicion towards outsiders, with socially meaningful activity of the individual confined within the limits of local social relationships.
- 4) A strong sense for the tradition and patriarchal belonging to the family and identification with it.

Comparing the situation such as it is today in Dragalevtsi and Obnova with pre-socialist characteristics, Roger Wittecker established both continuity and radical changes in the Bulgarian communal and family life during the 1970s. The economic ties of Dragalevtsi farmers to urban markets were intense in the pre-war



years. 14 per cent of the males, heads of families who owned land, travelled every day by cart to Sofia to sell milk; 50 per cent did this once every week. Despite this the village remained socially, psychologically and physically remote from the capital, though standing but a few kilometres away. 18 per cent of the women and 5.6 per cent of the men had never set foot in Sofia in their lives according to the 1934 poll. Even those who travelled to Sofia, moved in 'peasant circles' during their stay – the peasant market and a handful of taverns frequented by their fellows. The present-day Dragalevtsi poll shows that 63 per cent of the population travel to Sofia every day, at least two-thirds go to see a film there at least once a month, 55 per cent have been to the Sofia Opera Theatre, 20 per cent have been to see a ballet, 87 per cent have been to the theatre, and 12 per cent have heard a concert at least once in their lives. Almost all families polled own a TV set. Over the last three years some of the increased population of Dragalevtsi has found jobs in the industrial enterprises of Sofia. And just as most of the inhabitants of Dragalevtsi go to work, study and get entertainment in Sofia, so an increasing number of Sofioters penetrate into the local community (to work in the village health centre, at the school and the child-care centre). In the same manner the people of Obnova have entered the social, economic and educational structure outside their own community. The American sociologist substantiated this finding with concrete data and examples.

What has been said so far about Dragalevtsi and Obnova is but an illustration of a nation-wide process of making each town and country part of the national information, cultural and entertainment system. People in the villages have exactly the same educational and professional opportunities as people in the city. They also dispose of similar health, education and administrative services. "The processes of bringing the village closer to the city and the city closer to the village have created in the '70s a situation where one can no longer speak of a 'narrow peasant social orientation'. This was the estimate of Roger Whittecker, which in itself is highly characteristic of the overall changes that have occurred in the way of life of the Bulgarians.

We can judge the revolutionary progress in Bulgarian culture

by the quantitative growth of schools and universities, by the introduction of general high school education, by theatre and cinema shows, amateur art activities, which enjoy special state care and the public-state management of culture. We could also speak here of the diversity of styles and genres of writers, poets, playwrights, of modern Bulgarian painting, of the fascinating flourish of Bulgarian dramatic art, singing and music. It would take a lot of space to enumerate the achievements of discoverers and innovators, the progress of Bulgarian science, Bulgaria's place in the comprehensive space research programme, Bulgarian licenses abroad, etc.

One of the characteristic features of the history of the Bulgarians is that though they have twice been stripped of their state, the accomplishments of Bulgarian culture were never exterminated. On the contrary, they have been augmented and brought to the knowledge and notice of other nations as well. The early formation of the Bulgarian state on a territory of an ethnically homogeneous population is a notable fact of European and world history. As the home of the cause of Cyril and Methodius, mediaeval Bulgaria built up a culture that helped other nations, mostly Slavic, to survive and develop. In present times 60 nations, the Mongolians included, use the Cyrillic alphabet (with certain additions). This makes one-tenth of the world's population; the Russian language, which was evolved on the basis of this script, is one of the international languages.

The great achievements of literature and the other arts, the creative genius of the Bulgarian have come to life mostly in relation to the political struggles against domestic and foreign oppressors, for survival, freedom, independent development and the liberation of man from all oppression. If in the past insufficient attention was given to the masterpieces of Bulgarian culture outside the country, this was partly due to the poor knowledge of the history of the nation. This disparagement in former times, including the first half of the present century, was like a burden on the shoulders of Bulgarian artists and cultural workers. Some of them predicted already in their day that the process of the universalization of artistic values would stimulate an interest in what has been created in the Bulgarian language.



In a publication of 1930 on the place of Bulgarian literature on a world scale, Prof. Alexander Balabanov asserted that 'poetic ideals survived pure and intact' in the literatures of small nations. And if the Bulgarian people ever makes its mark in the world, 'it will be through its poetry, the poetry of its still unused and wonderfully potent language.' This language, said Prof. Balabanov, 'is pliable and hard as steel, glistens as marble, its turns are real symbols, its unity is absolute, its sounds are as tempestuous as the roar of the lion and as gentle as the murmur of the spring meadow by the crystal clear brook; it is varied and is not monotonous. And it will do for all spheres of life, for poetry and science...'

As a matter of fact the poetry of Hristo Botev is of late in wide demand. Through the man and writer Ivan Vazov one can perceive what was most characteristic of the Bulgarians at the turn of the 19th and in the first decades of the 20th century, and through Vaptsarov to realize the revolutionary pathos and the new directions in the development of the Bulgarian spirit and culture in most recent times. This is the talent of being able to get to the bottom of the conflicts of human life, and as Italian poet Leonardo Mancino said about Vaptsarov's poetry, to be able to then come up to the top filled with hope. And we should add with an open mind and full awareness of the risks that the disclosure of truth entails; and with faith which can be expressed in a language as simple as that of 'the common people'.

'Thousands are the names of our immortal precursors — builders and apostles of the Bulgarian state, literature and education, of Bulgarian art and culture, of the Bulgarian revolutionary movement,' reads the address to the Bulgarian people on the occasion of the 1300th anniversary of the foundation of the Bulgarian state, adopted at a joint session of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the State Council and the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the Ruling Council of the Bulgarian Agrarian Party, the National Council of the Fatherland Front, the Central Council of the Bulgarian Trade Unions, the Central Committee of the Dimitrov Young Communist League and the Central Committee of the Fighters against Fascism and Capitalism.



The Bulgarians are entering the ninth decade of the century and the fourteenth century of their history with the confidence of a nation reborn and rejuvenated. Having learnt its lessons from the good and bad points of its past, this transformed nation contributes to the best of its ability towards making its present and future better and full of optimistic promise, both for it and for the rest of the world.

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The most important pages are the ones that are left unwritten, i. e. His Majesty Life, present and future. It is in his name that all is done, including acquaintance with the past. What we have related so far we can sum up thus:

— The scientifically established laws of the development of human society can be traced on the Bulgarian lands from prehistoric to modern times. The very emergence of the Bulgarian state in 681 A. D. was undoubtedly a major event in the age of the disintegration of the slave-owning system. In this transitory stage of the spiral of progressive development Bulgaria inherited and continued further the immortal ancient heritage — Thracian, Thracian-Hellenic and Thracian-Roman culture. (pp. 3-11)

— The consolidation of the Bulgarian state also meant the consolidation (from the 7th to the 9th century) of one of the first stable and lasting historical communities in European history — the Bulgarian nation. (pp. 11-14)

— Bulgaria's relations with Byzantium to a large measure determined the course of developments in South-Eastern Europe for centuries on end. (pp. 14-16; 18-19)

— Old Bulgarian language and culture were a phenomenon that hailed the appearance of a new civilization and despite the vicissitudes of life (the Bulgarians were twice deprived of their state for long periods of time), the development, enrichment and further universalizations of this culture has continued undisturbed since the 9th century. (pp. 16-18; 19-20; 22-23)

— The second, unofficial line of the development of Bulgarian culture in the Middle Ages — the apocrypha and the Bogomil

literature which related and discussed the popular hardships of the times, spread to near and far countries. Its significance can be judged against the background of the progress of the world that followed and from the point of view of the transient nature of every social system built on the oppression and the exploitation of man by man. (pp. 20-22)

– In the years of foreign domination and oppression the Bulgarian people not only survived but also became one of the grave-diggers of the stronghold of obscurantism in the past ages – the Ottoman tyrannical system. (pp.23-27)

– The formation of the Bulgarian bourgeois nation and its liberation struggle, the Bulgarian National Revival and its peak – the April Uprising of 1876 – and the response to it in the world were one of the gravest tests for liberalism and revolutionary democratism on the eve of an about-turn in world development. (pp. 27-36)

– Bulgaria, liberated from Ottoman bondage (1878), embarked belatedly on the road of capitalist development with all resulting consequences for a country of small territory. (pp. 36-43)

– The left-wing forces at the end of the 19th and during the first quarter of the 20th century sought new solutions to the national and social problems (pp. 43-47)

– The degeneration of the bourgeois system in the country and the monarcho-fascist dictatorship exacerbated the conflict between capital and labour and made the social revolution inevitable. (pp. 47-49)

– The anti-fascist movement, the preparation and the establishment of a people's democratic government on September 9, 1944, was prompted by the internal development of the country and facilitated by outside factors. (pp. 49-54)

– the means of production and scientific and technological achievements are at the disposal of the whole nation. (pp. 54-57)

– The rapid socialist industrialization and the amalgamation of land through collectivization led to an increase in the number of towns and the urban way of life in the villages. (pp. 57-60)

– Bulgaria is entering its fourteenth century with its historical heritage and the dynamic of its present. (pp. 60-62)

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